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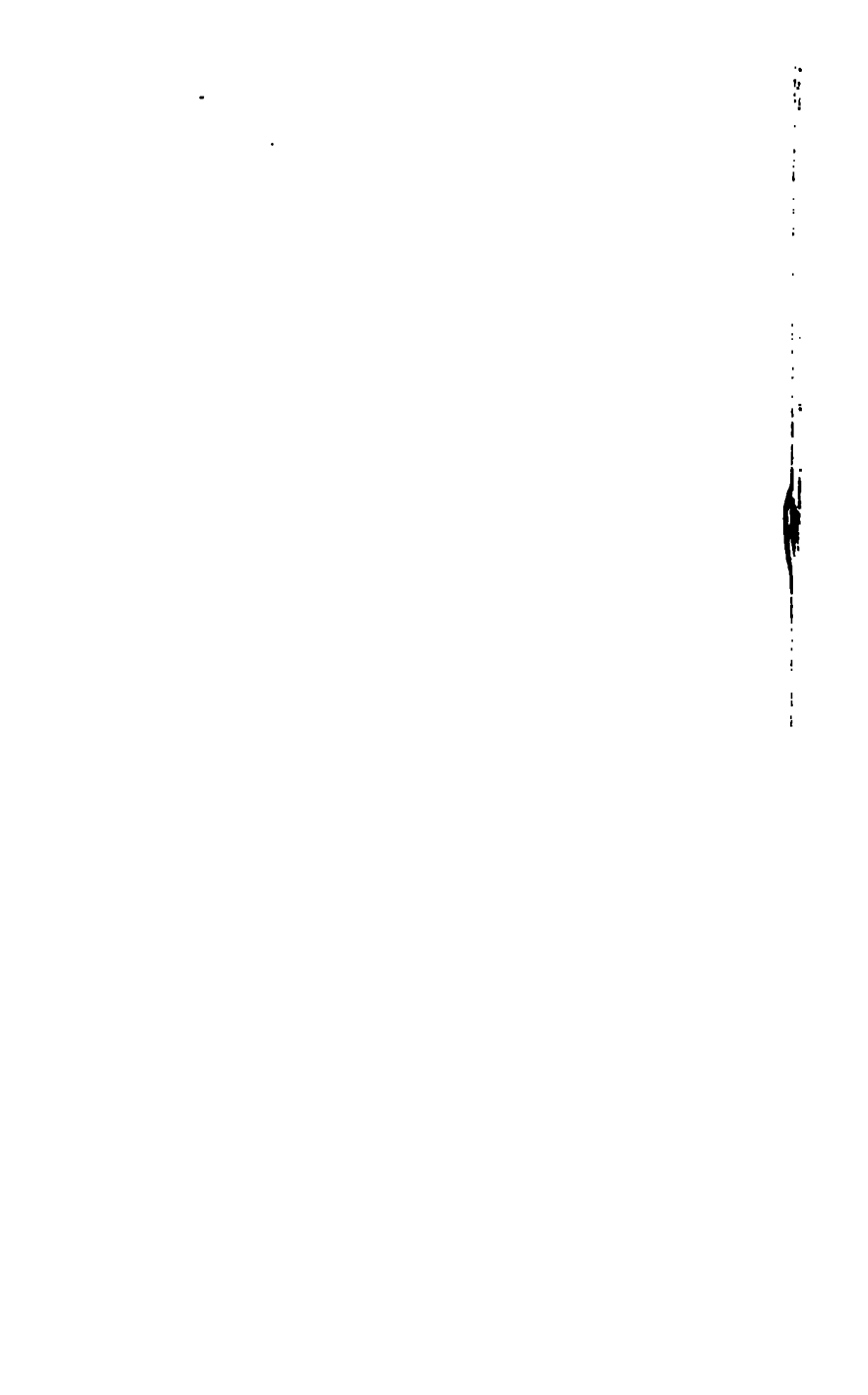


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HELPS FOR THE PULPIT:

OR,

SKETCHES AND SKELETONS

OF

SERMONS.

BY A MINISTER.

TWO VOLUMES IN ONE.

SECOND AMERICAN FROM THE FIFTH LONDON EDITION.

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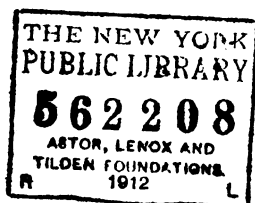
SMITH, ENGLISH & CO.,

No. 23 NORTH SIXTH STREET.

NEW YORK: PHINNEY, BLAKEMAN & MASON.

BOSTON: GOULD & LINCOLN.

1862.



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FIRST SERIES.

ONE HUNDRED AND TWO

SKETCHES AND SKELETONS

OF

SERMONS.

P R E F A C E.

THE design of this volume is to assist ministers in their preparations for preaching the Gospel of Christ. Hence its title is, "*Helps for the Pulpit.*" The greater part of the Outlines have been the guide of the Author in his public ministrations; and he believes that they were not only delivered with pleasure to himself, but also, through Divine influence, made a blessing to some who heard them. The sermon itself generally occupied from three-quarters of an hour to one hour in the delivery; but some of the Outlines will not take more than ten minutes to read them, and the others rather less. The preface or introduction to each discourse is generally short, blanks being introduced there, and also throughout each Outline, to indicate room for amplification. The Author has, in most cases, endeavored to preserve unity of design respecting the subject of the text, and to make the divisions natural and striking.

It has also been his aim throughout to give an evangelical view of the sublime doctrines of the Gospel, to make Christ prominent as the Great Redeemer, the Author of eternal salvation, the way, the truth, and the life, and to prostrate man before his cross, as a sinful, condemned, and ruined being, who, if he be saved, must rest his imperishable spirit on his finished work. It will be seen, too, that the Scripture references are numerous, and, on the whole, apposite to the subject. This is very important; for "*Scripture is power.*" Frequently a judicious quotation from the sacred oracles, and suitably delivered, has arrested the attention of the careless, awakened the sinner, comforted the believer, and riveted the truth on the conscience. Some may admire, and even recommend, floral, speculative, and philosophical preaching; but the *Gospel*, and that only, is "the power of God unto salvation," the principal and only legitimate subject of the Christian ministry, and which has associated with it the promise of success. "The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The Apostle well knew this, and therefore he said to the church at Corinth, "*My speech and my preaching were not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power, that your faith should not stand*"

in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God." To his son Timothy in the Gospel, he wrote, "I charge thee, therefore, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, *preach the word.*"

That there has been a lamentable departure in modern times from plain, scriptural, and evangelical preaching, is very obvious. The Author firmly believes that the retrograde movement of Christianity, so manifest in many localities, must, in a great measure, be attributed to this dereliction of duty.

Outlines of sermons, when properly used, may truly be considered as "Helps." They are not, however, to be servilely copied, or committed to memory verbatim. They are rather to be regarded as models and incentives, as a record of texts and subjects designed to guide the mind in its choice, and to create thought and invention; that is to say, if a young man should fix his attention upon an outline in the following pages, and resolve to adopt the same subject, he should, when writing *his* outline, consider himself as a competitor with the Author, and strive and pray that he may greatly surpass him in method and power. Outlines of sermons are sometimes useful to ministers, in directing them to subjects and texts for their ministrations. An inspection of the arrangement, and the ideas which they contain, has stimulated them to thought and invention, the result of which has sometimes been plans of sermons greatly superior; and a conviction of that superiority has given boldness and pleasure when they have delivered them from the pulpit.

Why then should the reading and using of such "Helps" be objected to? Does not the architect inspect models and plans of buildings, in order to acquire superior skill? Does not the orator read harangues, speeches, and debates, in order to improve his rhetorical powers? Do not the artist and the painter avail themselves of similar privileges for the same purpose? and is the Christian minister to be debarred? No; it is his interest and profit to inspect and consult models, plans, or complete structures of Divinity, eloquent scriptural orations, striking and beautiful pictures of salvation, Christ, and heaven, created by the genius of other men, that he may attain, in some good degree, the Divine art of preaching Christ, and winning souls to God.

W. N.

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL THE GROUND OF THE APOSTLE'S BOAST.

PART I.—THE GOSPEL.

"For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."—Rom. 1 : 16.

THE efficacy of any scheme is proved by its effects. If it answers the end designed; if any plan of benevolence, in science, in medicine, etc., secures the happiness, health, and interest of mankind, then do we at once praise the scheme, and readily avail ourselves of its professed benefits.

So the Gospel designs to save fallen man, to lift the needy from the dunghill, to dry the tears of the mourner, to ease the heavy heart, to heal its maladies, and repair its losses, by restoring to communion with God, and by giving the hope of immortality.

Has this been done? It has; and the New Testament abounds with specimens of the Gospel's efficacy. Hence Paul's conversion; he was the stern advocate of the Jewish economy—gloried in his literary attainments, blamelessness in reference to the law—once a hater and persecutor of the adherents of the cross. Then he was ashamed of the Gospel, and labored to exterminate it. Behold the power of the Gospel in his case!

In this chapter, Paul states his ardent love to the brethren at Rome, and his willingness to preach to them the Gospel there. Rome was a splendid and populous city, and he well knew that he should there meet with much opposition, and even peril of life; yet he says, "I am not ashamed," etc.

I. THE SUBJECT OF THE APOSTLE'S AVOWAL.—"THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST."

II. THE EFFICACY OF THE GOSPEL IN THE SALVATION OF MAN. "IT IS THE POWER OF GOD," ETC.

III. THE AVOWAL OF THE APOSTLE IN CONSEQUENCE OF THE GLORY AND EFFICACY OF THE GOSPEL.—"I AM NOT ASHAMED," ETC.

I. THE SUBJECT OF THE APOSTLE'S AVOWAL.—"THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST." What is the Gospel? It is not a mere *history of the life, actions, and death of Christ*, though the relation of all is replete with wonder and interest.—It is not merely the *moral*

the Gospel in the abstract, though that morality is the best and purest ever exhibited, and if generally practised would make heaven upon earth.—It is not merely an *exhibition of the perfections of God*, though they brilliantly shine in the Gospel of Christ. “He who was in the bosom of the Father hath declared him;” in this sense, “he that hath seen me, hath seen the Father also.”

The Gospel claims admiration also on account of its *revelation of a future state*, bringing life and *immortality* to light.—In all these respects the Gospel is very interesting.

But all this does not *fully express the real import* of the Gospel. If the Apostle meant by the Gospel no more than the perfections of Deity, the doctrine of Divine Providence, the immutable and everlasting distinction between right and wrong, the immortality of the soul, and a future state of rewards, there would not have been that peculiar charm and beauty in his avowal, “I am,” etc.

The word “gospel,” in the original, implies *good news*, or *glad tidings*. See Isa. 52 : 7, and Rom. 10 : 15. “How beautiful,” etc. See also Luke 2 : 10. Tidings of eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, health to the sick, strength to the weak, liberty to the captive, life to the dead, salvation to the lost, heaven for the outcast. See Luke 4 : 18, 19. The Gospel must thus be considered as a message of mercy from God to sinners—as a declaration of his good-will to man. John 3 : 16. Though the Gospel, as a system, contains various parts, yet all its parts may be resolved into the one grand doctrine of *redemption and salvation by the sacrifice of Christ*. “God was in Christ,” etc. 2 Cor. 5 : 18, 19 ; 1 Cor. 15 : 3 ; 1 Tim. 1 : 15.

Observe,

1st. *That man greatly needed the Gospel*. Man was fallen and ready to perish. In Adam we all fell—from him we derive a sinful nature. Our minds are dark and benighted as to God, and the things which belong to our peace. Our hearts are disaffected to God; we shun him, fly from him as Adam did when he had sinned; our life is a life of rebellion against him. Our carnal minds are enmity against God, they are not subject to the law of God, and cannot be till renewed by Divine grace. As *transgressors* of God’s holy law, we are under *the curse and penalty* of it, *obnoxious to the Divine wrath*, and liable every moment to endless perdition.

No man can fully understand the nature and appreciate the value of the Gospel, till he sees and feels himself as thus lost and ruined.

2d. *In order to save man, Christ became incarnate*—lived a holy and spotless life, proved his Messiahship by astonishing miracles of mercy, and by his wise and heavenly teaching, and at last submitted himself to the death of the cross—he satisfied the claims of Divine justice by enduring the penalty or curse for us. “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law,” etc. “He bare our sins,” etc. Isa. 53 : 4, 5, 6 ; Rom. 5 : 6, 7, 8.

3d. *That he rose again from the dead, for “our justification;”*

—and ascended to the right hand of God to be our Advocate with the Father. “He ever liveth to make intercession for us.”

4th. *That this Gospel, as the Gospel of Christ, is freely offered to all without money and without price.* “Ho every one that thirsteth,” etc. Isa. 55 : 1. “And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come,” etc. Rev. 22 : 17.

Is not this good news ? So the Samaritan Christians thought. Philip “preached Christ” there, and there was great joy in that city. Acts 8 : 5. When the Galatians first heard the gospel preached, they received Paul as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus, and had it been possible, they would have plucked out their eyes and have given them to him ; such was the *blessedness* they then enjoyed.—So also the Jailor of Philippi “rejoiced, believing in God,” etc. So will all believers feel and say, “We joy in God, through whom we have now received the atonement.”

Only think what misery and wrath the sinner is delivered from—what an immense price of suffering and death has been paid for his redemption—only think of the new creation of which it has made him the subject—the holy feelings it has infused into his heart, the spiritual privileges to which it has introduced him—his prospective victory over death and the grave, and his everlasting inheritance in heaven, and it must be conceded that the Gospel is *good news, glad tidings* of mercy to the chief of sinners.

How different this Gospel from the representations of some men who tell us that God is merciful, and that if we be only just and honest, he will save us!—They say Christ is merely a *good man*, who teaches by his life, how to live, and by his death, how to die. Such a system is opposed to the Gospel. If the Gospel had only a moral reference to man, Paul would not have said, “I am not *ashamed* of the Gospel of Christ.” The Jewish doctors and the philosophers of Rome would have had no objections to it. It was the sacrifice of Christ, etc., which was so offensive to them, as it is to some men now.—This Gospel, however, must be preached in its purity and scriptural simplicity, fearless of men or devils. Hence Paul said, “If any man preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” This leads to observe,

5th. That the Gospel is not only glorious, but also characterized by the *greatest simplicity*. It is so plain, that “the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein.”

Its great doctrines, though capable of exercising the most elevated minds, are adapted to the common understanding. Were they dark and abstruse, they might gratify a speculative mind, but would be lost upon the multitude, and be unprofitable to all, as doctrines of consolation. The mass of mankind never can be profound reasoners. For this they have not time. Instruction to do them good must be interesting, solemn, repeated, and *plain*. This is the benign office of the Gospel. Its principal topics are few, they are constantly recurring in various connections ; they come home to every man’s condition ; they have an interpreter in his bosom ; they are enforced by motives which honesty can hardly mistake, and conscience will rarely dispute. Unlettered men, who love the Bible, seldom quarrel about the prominent

articles of faith and duty; and as seldom do they appear among the proselytes of that meagre refinement which arrogates the title of *Philosophical Christianity*.

The *value* of this *simplicity* is very apparent in the *hour of trouble*. Grief, whether in the learned or illiterate, is always simple. A man overwhelmed with grief wants nothing to do with that which is complex; he has no relish for investigation. Then, as his powers relax, his spiritual support must be without toil, or his spirit faints. The unlearned compose the bulk of Christians: the life of whose souls springs from the substantial doctrines of the cross.—Yes, and in the time of distress, even the careless open their ears to the voice of revelation.—Precious, at all times, is the Gospel to believers, but it is doubly precious in the hour of sorrow.

These remarks will condemn the conduct of those dominant priests who keep the Bible from the perusal of the laity, or ordinary Christians, alleging that none but those possessing a collegiate education, and consecrated to their office by superior ecclesiastics, have a right, or are qualified, to read and expound the scriptures. Though learning, combined with good natural abilities for thinking and speaking, may be of the greatest service in explaining, illustrating, and defending the sublime truths of revelation, yet the way of salvation may, can, and has been understood and savingly felt, in innumerable instances, by persons devoid of those natural and acquired advantages; and that to assert the contrary, must be regarded as an effort to uphold a system which savors of man rather than of God.

O how unlike the complex works of man,
Heaven's easy, artless, unencumbered plan!
No meretricious graces to beguile,
No clustering ornaments to clog the pile:
From ostentation as from weakness free,
It stands like the cerulean arch we see,
Majestic in its own simplicity.
Inscribed above the portal, from afar
Conspicuous, as the brightness of a star,
Legible only by the light they give,
Stand the soul-quickening words,—Believe and Live!

6th. Again, the Gospel bears the *impress of truth*. The text calls it *the power of God*, and it is frequently called the truth of God, the word of truth, and the wisdom of God, etc., Gal. 3 : 1; Rom. 3 : 7; 15 : 8; etc. How beautiful and cogent the reasoning of the Apostle in 1 Cor. 15 : 1-8! see also Eph. 4 : 21; John 1 : 9; 14 : 6; 1 Pet. 5 : 12; 1 John 5 : 20.

The man who dreams of happiness feels a new sting in his wretchedness, when he opens his eyes and finds the delusion fled. No real misery can be removed, nor any real benefit conferred, by doctrines which lack the seal of certainty. And were the Gospel of Christ a human invention, or checked by any rational supposition that it may turn out to be a fable, it might retain its brilliancy, its sublimity, and some portion of its interest, but the charm of its consolation would be gone. It would only add gall to bitterness, by fostering a hope which the next hour might laugh to scorn. But we may dismiss our fears, for there is no danger of such an issue. Not only "grace," but "truth came by Jesus Christ." "The gracious words which proceeded out of

his mouth," were the words of the "Amen, the faithful and *true Witness*;" and those words which he has written in his blessed book, are "pure words, as silver tried in the furnace, purified seven times." See Heb 6 : 17, 19.

It is this truth which makes the Gospel "glad tidings" to perishing sinners. No fear of disappointment! No hope that shall make ashamed! Under the feet of evangelical faith is a covenant-promise, ordered in all things and *sure*; that promise is an everlasting rock. "I know," said one, whose testimony is corroborated by millions in both worlds, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

APPLICATION.

- 1st. Be thankful for the Gospel.
- 2d. Be cheered by its simplicity, truth, and power.
- 3d. Receive and believe it.
- 4th. Those who despise and reject it, can have no other substantial hope of immortality.

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL THE GROUND OF THE APOSTLE'S BOAST.

PART II.—THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL.

"For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."—Rom. 1 : 16.

It is of great importance to have the Gospel, more important to understand it, but still more important and advantageous to realize its blessed influence. He who so feels it, binds it to his heart as the chief good allotted to him on earth.——We dwell amid the blaze of Gospel glory. Ancient worthies had only a dim *taper* to guide their feet; we have the brightest *sunbeams*. They had only the *green blade* of the corn, we have the *fulness of harvest*. They had the *shadow*, we have the *light*. They had only a few *drops* by which to refresh themselves, we have the whole *stream* of God's mercy poured upon us. The *day-spring* from on high has visited us, —— the atonement for human guilt has been offered up—it has been accepted, and crowned with honor and glory in the salvation of millions of undying spirits. —— It is still the power of God unto salvation.

Having considered

I. THE SUBJECT OF THE APOSTLE'S AVOWAL, — "THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST," consider now,

II. THE EFFICACY OF THE GOSPEL IN THE SALVATION OF MAN.

"IT IS THE POWER OF GOD TO SALVATION TO EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH."

The Thracians had a very striking emblem expressive of the Almighty power of God. It was a sun with three beams—one shining on a sea of ice and melting it; another upon a rock, and dissolving it; and a third upon a dead man, and raising him to new and vigorous life.

This emblem beautifully harmonizes with the *Gospel sun*, shining upon a dark and frozen world. It is the power of God to melt the hardest heart into obedience to the Divine will, and to raise the dead in trespasses and sins to a life of righteousness. The Gospel will do more to moralize the world in a week, than has been done by all other systems from their first publication. When this power touches the heart, it breaks every link in the adamant chain of rebellion. The ancient systems, with all their divinities, sacrifices, charms, and oracles, could not reform a single village. But what converts has this Gospel made—changing the most vicious and abandoned to holy men.—Of all the names that are emblazoned in the annals of literature and science, where will names be found so illustrious as those of Christians? For unbounded philanthropy—zeal for truth—solace in trials—fortitude in suffering—triumph in the hour of death: in all these things the Gospel bears away the palm of glory.

"It is the power of God." What is this power? We shall answer,

1st. *Negatively.*

(1.) Not the *power of working miracles*, thereby confirming the truth of the Gospel to those who heard it.

It was necessary immediately after the ascension of Christ, to accompany the preaching of the Gospel by miraculous power (Heb. 2 : 4), to convince men of the Divine mission of Christ, and to remain a standing evidence of the same. — The Apostle, however, speaks of a power promotive of salvation "to every one that believeth;" and every believer did not work miracles. A power altogether different is therefore intended by the Apostle.

(2.) By "power" here is not meant *civil power*, as wielded by potentates or magistrates. Hence at several times, and especially during the crusades, numerous armies have been mustered, and sent forth fully accoutred with guns and swords to dragoon the nations into their views of Christianity. — Hence persecutions, imprisonments, and martyrdoms, have been employed as a power to spread what they called religion, and they represented that power as the *power of God*. "But the weapons of our warfare are not carnal," etc., 2 Cor. 10 : 4. — The Gospel is spiritual, and its propagation requires spiritual means. Human force cannot do it.

(3.) By "power" is not meant the *power of human eloquence* merely, though sometimes productive of very strong impressions, and in many cases found to be almost irresistible.

Eloquence may be artificial and natural. The former consists chiefly

in a felicitous selection of terms, and an elegant construction of sentences, delivered with rhetorical effect. Paul declined such eloquence in his ministry to the polite and voluptuous citizens of Corinth. See 1 Cor. 2 : 1-5, and 1 Thess. 1 : 5. — There is also a natural eloquence which is the effect of an ardent mind, deeply impressed with the truth and importance of what is delivered. — Such was Paul's address to Felix, and King Agrippa. They were unable to withstand the argumentative appeals, and the pathetic tenderness of the speaker, though the impression was only superficial and transient. — But it is not in the power of eloquence, however enchanting, and though it may invest the doctrines of Christianity with all the charms, and with all the terrors of truth and righteousness, to bring one sinner to God. — Felix trembled and turned away. Agrippa was convinced, but not persuaded to become a Christian.

(4.) It is not merely the *power of truth itself*, though this often produces a strong effect. "By the power of truth we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." There is an omnipotence in truth which cannot be resisted: the consciences of men are made to echo to its supreme authority.

Though an unwelcome visitor, it shines into the conscience, silences objections, and gains a temporary triumph, producing sometimes confessions and humiliations. — These effects are frequently mistaken for repentance, etc. — Pharaoh could not deny the divinity of the mission of Moses and Aaron. Saul acknowledged that David was more righteous than himself; but both continued to persecute. — Many of Christ's hearers were convinced of his Messiahship by witnessing his miracles, while enmity, and fear, and carnal policy prevented their devotedness to him. — Many hear the Gospel, believe its truth and importance; but are like "a man beholding his face in a glass," etc.

2d. *Positively.* The power intended by the Apostle is the power of God accompanying truth; so that it comes in the "demonstration of the Spirit," etc. "Paul may plant," etc. "The weapons of our warfare," etc. "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness," etc. Apostolic success was ascribed to "the hand of the Lord." It is the office of the Spirit to convince the world of sin, and to take of the things of Christ and show them to us. In short, it is that power which "quickens us when dead in trespasses and sins," which "calls out of darkness," etc. The Spirit makes us "new creatures in Christ Jesus," stamps the image of Christ upon the soul, and seals for the inheritance of heaven. See Eph. 1 : 13.


God, knowing the weakness of man, promised and gave this glorious influence. It was promised as a covenant blessing. See Ezek. 36 : 25, 27; Joel 2 : 28; Zech. 12 : 10; Isa. 44 : 3. Christ promised it to his disciples; John 19 : 26, etc. etc. Therefore it accompanies the preaching of the Gospel to render it powerful. Hence the Apostle argues, Gal. 3 : 2.

Observe, "*It is the power of God unto salvation.*" Salvation

implies *danger*, and in a spiritual sense exposure to everlasting punishment.—— Salvation implies *deliverance*, and the Gospel reveals the plan of deliverance, and the Spirit opens the eyes of the sinner to understand it, and inclines his heart to embrace it.

1st. *It is the power of God to awaken and convert the sinner.* When it comes in power and the Holy Ghost, it chases away the darkness of the mind, and overcomes obstinacy and unbelief. "The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword." It places the sinner before the bar of justice, where condemnation, tribulation, and anguish are denounced against him. He is there stripped of his self-importance; it "sweeps away his refuge of lies," and shows him that death which is "the wages of sin." He is alarmed, and cries, "What must I do to be saved?"

2d. *It is the power of God in the pardon of sin, and justification from condemnation.* It proclaims to the alarmed, desponding sinner, that however guilty he may be, there is now, through the death of Christ, forgiveness with God that he may be feared. It exhibits Christ to him as an able and willing Saviour—able to save to the uttermost.——Resting his soul on the sacrifice of the Saviour, he is pardoned—freely justified from all law charges—Christ for him paid the penalty.——He is therefore regarded by Heaven as innocent. See Rom. 8 : 1; Acts 13 : 38, 39; Rom. 8 : 33, 34.

 The worst of men—the vilest of the vile have been saved, and still the blood of atonement retains its efficacy. "Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost," etc.

3d. *It is the power of God to renew the soul.* It produces an entire change of heart, by which sin is hated, and holiness loved and pursued.——The sinner is made "a new creature in Christ Jesus." See Eph. 4 : 22–24. It was as much the design of Christ to save from the dominion of sin, as to save from everlasting perdition.——To walk as Christians, and to be like Christ,—grace sufficient is communicated.

4th. *It is the power of God to adopt into his family.*——To give enjoyment of all the exalted privileges of the Christian dispensation—and especially communion with God himself. "Behold what manner of love," etc. 1 John 3 : 1; John 1 : 12; and other passages.

5th. *It is the power of God to inspire the soul with the hope of immortality and eternal life.* Rom. 15 : 4; Col. 1 : 5, 27; 2 Thess. 2 : 16; Titus 2 : 13; Heb. 6 : 18, 19; 1 Pet. 1 : 3, 4. This hope cheers in trials, sufferings, and death.

6th. *It is the power of God to conquer death.* 1 Cor. 15 : 55, 57. Heb. 2 : 14, 15. The weakest and the most timid Christians, who have been all their lifetime subject to bondage, have been so fortified and animated by the Gospel in their last moments, that they have then appeared as more than conqueror through Christ who hath loved them.

7th. *It is the power of God to give a glorious resurrection of the body from the grave, and to elevate both body and soul to the glories*

of heaven. John 6 : 40; Phil. 3 : 20; 2 Cor. 5 : 1, 6-8; John 17 : 24; 14 : 1; etc.

Such is the power of the Gospel. The experienced Christian can declare, I have seen the Gospel hush into a calm the tempest raised in the bosom by conscious guilt. I have seen it melt down the most obdurate into tenderness and contrition. I have seen it cheer up the broken-hearted, and bring the tear of gladness into eyes swollen with grief. I have seen it save characters akin to Manasseh, Magdalene, Saul of Tarsus, the Corinthians, etc. — I have seen it produce and maintain serenity under evils which drive the worldly mad. I have seen it reconcile the sufferer to his cross, and send the song of praise from lips quivering with agony. I have seen it enable the most affectionate relatives to part in death; not without emotion, but without repining; and with a cordial surrender of all that they held most dear, to the disposal of their heavenly Father. I have seen the fading eye brighten at the promise of Jesus, "Where I am, there shall my servant be also." I have seen the Christian welcome death, and heard him say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." I have seen the spirit released from its clay, and mildly, and triumphantly, to enter into the joy of its Lord. Yes, I have seen the Gospel the power of God unto salvation.

"The Cross! it takes our guilt away,
It holds the fainting spirit up;
It cheers with hope the gloomy day,
And sweetens every bitter cup.
It makes the coward spirit brave,
And nerves the feeble arm for fight;
It takes all terrors from the grave,
And gilds the bed of death with light.
The balm of life, the cure of woe,
The measure and the pledge of love;
'Tis all that sinners want below,
'Tis all that angels know above."

Finally. Observe 1st. *Only those who believe* can enjoy this salvation: "to every one that believeth." Not merely to those who hear it, admire it, or profess it. Faith regards and credits the testimony which God hath given of his Son. Faith is the surrender of the soul to Christ to be washed in his blood, etc., etc. Sometimes called *looking* to him, *beholding* him, *eating and drinking*, *coming* to him, *trusting* in him, etc. Eph. 1 : 12, 13. — All Gospel blessings are obtained by faith. It is the hand stretched forth to receive them.

Observe 2d. *Its order and extent.* "To the Jew first, and also to the Greek." This order was according to the will of Christ; "beginning first at Jerusalem." See Acts 13 : 46. — It is the glory of the Gospel that it is not confined to any nation. — "Go ye, teach all nations," etc.

APPLICATION.

1. Let us be sensible of our weakness and wretchedness, and praise God for the power of his Gospel.

2. From hence we learn to judge of our religious state. How

do we hear the Gospel? Do we feel the working of enmity or love? A state of neutrality cannot exist; the Gospel is either a savor of life unto life, etc.

3. Let the convinced sinner believe and rejoice; it will be the power of God unto his salvation.

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL THE GROUND OF THE APOSTLE'S BOAST.

PART III.—THE AVOWAL OF THE APOSTLE.

"For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth," etc. — Rom. 1 : 16.

THE Apostle Paul was distinguished for humility and ardent love to the Saviour. The former was induced by the Spirit's influence in creating in his mind a constant recollection of his former state of enmity and persecution. "He was once a persecutor," etc. — The latter was induced by the grace of God, which had been abundantly manifested in his conversion, and his elevation to the office of an Apostle. — His ardent love he constantly manifested by faithful and energetic preaching of the Cross of Christ—by defending its doctrines against the cavils of adversaries — by a willingness to exert himself to the utmost in order to spread the Gospel far and wide,—and also, if needful, to suffer and die for the name of the Lord Jesus. — In every place, and before all men, learned or illiterate, civil or barbarian, etc., he gloried in the cross of Christ. — It was his experimental acquaintance with the sublime doctrines of the Gospel that made him not ashamed. — The cause of all that formality, apathy, timidity, and inefficiency of the church at this day, is the want of a comprehensive knowledge of the doctrines of the cross, and of heartfelt experience of their vital and saving power. To be useful for God and man, we must imbibe the spirit of Paul.

I. JUSTIFY AND ILLUSTRATE THE AVOWAL OF THE APOSTLE: "I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST."

I do not disown it; I am not confused; it does not make me blush; in whatever company I am, I do not fear to bring it forward as the sublimest topic that can engage the powers of man, and which totally eclipses the supposed grandeur of all other subjects of conversation. Nay, this Gospel produces in me joy, and the joy of the Lord is my strength, so that whatever opposition and discouragement I meet with, I am not ashamed, I am not confounded.

The text is best illustrated by Isa. 28 : 16; quoted Rom. 10 : 11; "whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed;" neither be confounded nor disappointed of their hope. The Jews, by not believing on Christ as the promised Messiah, and expecting another, they have been rejected and confounded to the present day. But those who have

believed on Christ, have received all the blessings predicted by the prophets. Paul, as a Jew, believed on Christ, and enjoyed an abundance of grace, so that, being filled with that happiness which the Gospel produces, he could cheerfully say, "I am not ashamed," etc.

"He was not ashamed of the Gospel,"

1st. *On account of its intrinsic excellency.* [Here recapitulate the nature of the Gospel, as set forth in Part I.] In whatever light we regard it, it is "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God." So replete with interest and glory that earthly vocabularies cannot adequately express it. "God SO loved the world," etc. — It is the wonder and glory of angels in heaven — and shall a sinful worm of earth be ashamed of it?

I am not ashamed of its *doctrines*! Are they not wise, important, and instructive? Do they not suit my state as a sinner? and are they not of infinite importance to all mankind? — I am not ashamed of the *precepts* of the Gospel! No, they are holy, just, and good. — I am not ashamed of the *ordinances of the Gospel*. They may expose me to contempt. But "I shall not be ashamed when I have respect to all thy commandments." And "he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." — I am not ashamed of the *threatenings* of the Gospel. Though some say they are severe, they are all righteous; they are directed against sin—they promote holiness and happiness — I am not ashamed of the *privileges and promises* of the Gospel. No! they are sweet, various, and very refreshing. I see, I feel Christ and heaven in them. And the promises are all yea and Amen, etc. "I am not ashamed," etc.

Infidels may tell me that the Author of this Gospel was a mean impostor. Nevertheless, I am not ashamed, for that which is holy will ever be inimical to the carnal mind. Though my Saviour was meanly born in Bethlehem—though for him there was no room in the inn—though his birth-place was in the manger of a stable—though he was the son of a carpenter—though during his ministry "foxes had holes," etc.—though he was despised and rejected of men—though the grandees of the world hid their faces from him—though he was crucified as a malefactor, and hanged on a tree, and suffered and died, I am not ashamed: he conquered when he fell—he rose again from the dead—was declared to be the son of God with power—he ascended as the intercessor of the world, the Prince of Life, the King of Glory, and every knee shall yet bow to him, and every tongue confess, etc. Therefore I am not ashamed.

2d. *On account of its sovereign and unfailing efficacy.* "It is the power," etc. [Recapitulate its efficiency as set forth in Part II.]

Shall I be ashamed of that which opened mine eyes, softened my heart, dissolved my chains, opened my prison door, and set me free? Ashamed of that which gave me light for darkness, pardon for guilt, joy for despair, faith for doubt, etc. etc. Shall I be ashamed of that efficacious medicine so admirably adapted for the health of my soul, and the souls of sinners?—Shall I be ashamed of that mighty lever which is designed by Heaven to elevate the world from the ruins of the fall,

and produce millennial glory over this world which has been scathed and withered by Satan and sin? No, I am not ashamed.

3d. *On account of its superiority over every other system.*

It is superior to every other system devised for the moral elevation of man. Philosophy has promulgated its plans. Legislators have enacted their laws. Education and Science have put forth their schemes, but physicians of no value have they been when compared with the efficacious power of the Gospel. None of the ancient philosophers ever gave any definite idea of a future state. But life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel. The Gospel directs its remedy to the heart, where the disease of sin exists; other systems lose sight of this. But it is the glory of the Gospel, that it strikes at the root of the moral and spiritual maladies of man, and brings to him Christ the *Physician* and the *balm* of his blood.——Paul had accounted the law of Moses the most glorious system, but how different his language subsequently! See his arguments, Phil. 8 : 4–11.

4th. *It is worthy to engage the most lofty and elevated powers of man.* It was the grand subject of *angelic ministration*——the glorious subject of the *Spirit's communication* to the prophets, to Christ (Luke 4 : 18), and to the Apostles. The Gospel therefore must have been transcendently glorious, and fully accounts for Paul's avowal, "I am not ashamed," etc.

The Apostle frequently asserts throughout his writings the *grandeur* of the Gospel, and his own *unworthiness* to proclaim it: "Unto me who am less than the least," etc. And yet Paul possessed *great mental powers*.——But notwithstanding all his mental talents, learning, etc., he was not ashamed of the Gospel.——The subject of his embassy was so glorious that he was not ashamed to declare it at Rome, the imperial city, the seat of universal empire, the residence of statesmen, philosophers, renowned poets, orators, artists, historians, etc.,—the seat of science and literature, etc. etc. "He was not ashamed," etc., at Corinth, at Athens, when he stood on Mars hill; nor when he appeared before a splendid court, where *Agrippa* presided, and where *Festus* sat. Nor before *Cæsar* himself.

5th. *The declaration implies that he was not only not ashamed of it, but that he gloried in it, and was ready to suffer and die for it.* Gal. 6 : 14. He gloried in it to that degree, that he was dead to all things else.——See Phil. 1 : 14, 20; Acts 20 : 24; 21 : 13; Phil. 2 : 17.

II. THAT SOME ARE ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. There are many of this description. Many profess great things, great love, great zeal, who, if tested by persecution, infidel cavils, association with the poor, etc. etc., would be ashamed.

1st. *Those are sure to be ashamed of the Gospel who do not experience its saving power.* This is very obvious; for where "hope" exists, it maketh not ashamed, etc. Rom. 5 : 5.——Not only sinners, but some in the church are ashamed, because the root of the matter is not in them. Rom. 10 : 11.

2d. *Those are ashamed of the Gospel who regard Christ's followers as too poor and mean for their association.*

Thus the Pharisees objected, "Have any of the Rulers, or of the Pharisees, believed on him?" The meanness of Christ's outward appearance, and that of his followers, was a stumbling-block to the Jews. But Christ tests the love of all, "because he hath chosen the foolish, weak, base, and despised things of the world to confound," etc. 1 Cor. 1 : 27. How different the estimate of God! "To the poor the Gospel is preached." Divine things "are revealed to babes." Christ "is not ashamed to call them brethren." Heb. 2 : 11. And "God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city." Heb. 11 : 16.

3d. *Some are ashamed of it because, as they assert, it is mysterious and irrational.* So it was accounted foolishness by the Greeks.——"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," etc. They believe the mysteries of nature, but not the mysteries of grace.

4th. *Its doctrines and precepts enjoin upon the believer a holy life,* therefore many are ashamed of it, and reject it. It requires the surrender of everything put in competition with Christ. It requires the heart,——deadness to the world, etc.

5th. *Those are ashamed of the Gospel who unite with it human inventions to suit the carnal taste of man.* Hence if the Gospel will not attract, a pompous ritual, imposing ceremonies, gaudy robes, and other adornments, shall fascinate. Music shall yield its harmonious strains, and the tongue of eloquence shall captivate, etc. etc.

6th. *Those ministers are ashamed of the Gospel, who do not proclaim it fully.*

Some ministers trim and arrange the Gospel so as to suit the wishes of their hearers. Others hold back its most prominent doctrines, or conceal them by specious arguments; they preach not the law as that which condemns, nor the grace of the Gospel as that which saves. Before "ears polite," they dare not expose the nakedness, blindness, and wretchedness of the sinner.——Mark the fearlessness of Paul.——See him before Felix, reasoning on righteousness, etc., till he "trembled."——When Latimer was called to preach before Henry, he told him the truth. A court sycophant begged that he might be sent to prison. Latimer, unmoved, said, "I came at the command of your majesty; and if your majesty had commanded me to bear the sandals of the very dog of your company, I would have done it. But when I enter the pulpit, I have another monarch to serve, and HIM I must obey."

III. THE DANGER OF BEING ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.

1st. *It is an evidence of great insensibility, infatuation, and spiritual madness.*

The sinner is not ashamed of the phantoms and the bubbles of life which he pursues. In his practice he shows the imbecility of a child,

and sometimes the spirit of a demon——but he is not ashamed——not ashamed of his licentiousness——his prodigality——he glories in his shame! Awful madness!

2d. *Shame, as it prevents belief, will deprive the soul of the blessing proffered by the Gospel.*

3d. *Those who are ashamed of the Gospel of Christ shall meet with a similar return at last: "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me," etc. Luke 9 : 26.*

They have sown to the flesh, and of the flesh, etc.—have sown shame and they shall reap shame; "they shall awake to everlasting contempt," Dan. 12 : 2. While saints are received, honored, and glorified, they are rejected, confounded, and lost.——Yes, when Christ shall come in all his original and uncreated glories, as Jehovah's fellow, King of kings, etc.; when he shall wear many crowns, and be accompanied by a splendid retinue of holy angels; when monarchs and princes shall deem it their highest honor to do him homage——he will be ashamed of them who will not confess him now.

APPLICATION.

1st. Be bold and valiant for Christ. For this purpose, study the life of Paul, and all who have been eminent for piety and usefulness.

2d. Depart from all iniquity. Neither be ashamed of the Gospel, nor be a shame to it.

3d. Christians will triumph at the last day, though they are now esteemed as the "filth of the world."

THE HAPPINESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

"Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him."—Isa. 3 : 10.

The greatest happiness a man can realize in this world, arises from the influence of the Spirit, bearing witness with his spirit that he is a child of God; for such an experience assures him that he is the subject of the precious promises, privileges, and hopes of the Gospel.——All the promises are made to specific characters; and by this we may ascertain our state.——Hence, while in the context, threatenings are denounced against the wicked, the safety and triumph of the righteous amidst impending judgments, are distinctly pointed out. "Say ye to the righteous," etc.

I. WHO ARE THE RIGHTEOUS?

Negatively,

1st. *Not the self-righteous, who have a high opinion of themselves—who trust in themselves that they are righteous, and despise*

others. It cannot be well with them, for they deny the sacrifice of Christ, by which sinners are constituted righteous.

2d. *Not those who deny the necessity and importance of good works.* Rom. 6: 1, 2.

Positively. This leads to a very affecting truth, viz., that all by sin are *unrighteous*. "There is none righteous, no not one."—Observe,

1st. *Every true believer is righteous according to the covenant of grace.* Rom. 5: 1; 4: 3, 23–25; 5: 18, 19.

2d. *They have an inherent righteousness wrought in them by the Holy Spirit.* They are "born again,"—"renewed in the spirit of their minds," and are "new creatures in Christ Jesus."

3d. *They declare by their conduct that they are righteous.* "They love mercy, do justly," etc. They "have their fruit unto holiness," etc.

II. THEIR HAPPINESS:—"IT SHALL BE WELL WITH HIM."

1st. *Their present state of Justification, etc., already described, proves this:* they are free from guilt and condemnation. "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven," etc. This freedom gives hope, and is the precursor of blessedness to come.

2d. *They have a good conscience.* Heb. 9: 14; 10: 21, 22; 2 Cor. 1: 12.

3d. *They enjoy all the pleasures of true religion, arising from the possession of Christian graces, the enjoyment of Christian privileges, and the performance of Christian duties.*

4th. *It shall be well with them in all adverse circumstances.* In persecution, in temptation, in poverty, in sickness, and under bereavement.

5th. *In death,* the period when the presence of God is most needed.

"When their heart and their flesh fail," etc. "Yea, though I walk through the valley," etc. God sends his Spirit to cheer them.—— Christ leaves them not then. "O death," etc.—— Wicked men then bear their testimony to the excellency of religion.——

"Tis religion that can give
Solid pleasure while we live;
'Tis religion can supply
Solid comfort when we die."

6th. *At the resurrection.* "They that have done good, shall come forth to the resurrection of life." "He shall change our vile body," etc. "As we have borne," etc.

"Arrayed in glorious hope,
Shall these vile bodies shine:
And every form, and every face,
Look heavenly and divine."

7th. *At the judgment day.* "Come, ye blessed," etc. "The righteous shall go into life eternal." See Mal. 3: 17.

8th. *Forever in Heaven.* They shall be "with Christ;" shall be free from sin; shall associate with angels, and the spirits of the just; they shall understand the works of God, and their happiness and glory shall be uninterrupted. They shall be "forever with the Lord."

APPLICATION.

- 1st. This happiness is certain; "Say ye," etc. The Lord speaks.
- 2d. Are you righteous?
- 3d. Woe to the wicked.

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP.

"Will ye also be his disciples?" — JOHN 9:27.

THE miracles performed by Christ proved his divinity; they were designed to confirm the truth of his Messiahship, as well as to benefit those who became the subjects of his miraculous power. — We have the same evidence now—from recorded miracles—the continuance of Christianity after all opposition—and the miracles of grace constantly being performed — there is sufficient evidence to induce to Christian discipleship.

This question was proposed to the Pharisees, by the man whose eyes Christ had opened — they wanted the miracle not to be true. — The man upbraids them for their wilful and unreasonable opposition to the evidence of this miracle. He would not gratify them with a repetition of the story; verse 27. The text, on the part of the man, seems to imply (1.) *Conviction.* He that has opened my eyes must be God. (2.) *Decision.* As he has declared himself to be God in my case, I will be his disciple. (3.) *Benevolence.* "Will ye also," etc.

I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN BEING A DISCIPLE OF CHRIST?

The word disciple means one who learns from a master, a scholar, a servant, a follower, a believer, a Christian. Acts 6:1; 9:1.

To be a disciple then, involved many sacrifices — it is different now.

1st. *This character is quite different to that of the unregenerate.* Their master is Satan: their service is sin—they are in darkness, ignorance, condemnation; "Men love darkness rather," etc. "For the soul to be without knowledge is not good;" "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Satan keeps them in blindness, and while in his captivity, they do but fill up the measure of their iniquity.

2d. *To be a disciple of Christ, is to be called by Christ into his school, even as the disciples were called.* — He calls by his Word — Spirit — Providence — by his people, and conscience.

3d. *Compliance with that call*, even as the disciples left all, and followed Christ. He who thus responds, believes in Christ——publicly professes his name——enters his church.

4th. *Implies a change of heart and of conduct.*——Necessity of this.——Christ and his disciples must possess congeniality. Regeneration effects this.

5th. *Highly to esteem and love the Master*, even Christ. He is a wise teacher, infinitely benevolent, altogether lovely——tender and sympathetic with all his disciples, knows their frame, etc., touched with a feeling of their infirmities——and for his disciples he shed his blood, and purchased for them heaven and its ineffable glory. Therefore they love him.

6th. *Consecration of every talent to promote his glory.* Disciples preached, spread his cause, and defended it; they conflicted, suffered, sacrificed——died for their Master.

7th. *Implies that they make progress in learning.* They are in the school of Christ——doctrinal, practical, experimental school, the school of affliction, etc. What progress have you made?——Some progress not, “When for the time, ye ought to be teachers,” etc. Heb. 5:12.

Lastly. *This state of discipleship is preparatory to a higher state——heaven*; where the mind will be expanded: mysteries explained——in the immediate presence of the Great Master; see him face to face; he will show the wonders of his love, and of eternity.

II. PRESS THE INQUIRY, “WILL YE ALSO BE HIS DISCIPLES?”

1st. *From the nature of the question itself.*

(1.) *You have the will*; “Will ye,” etc.—power to examine and investigate truth——have evidence to convince you of the importance of Christian discipleship——you have the aid of the Holy Spirit.

(2.) *The inquiry is personal*; “Will ye?” “You must be born again.” It is a matter that deeply affects you.

(3.) *The benevolency of the inquiry*; “Ye also.” I see and feel the importance and value of this discipleship. O come into this school——this delightful association, etc. I do not want to go to heaven alone. “Will ye also be his disciples?”

2d. *From motives intimately connected with the subject.*

(1.) *To be a disciple of Christ is honorable.* The most eminent of men have been disciples——thousands now in glory were once in the school of Christ.

(2.) *It is pleasant.* Learning pleasant, intercourse with God pleasant.

(3.) *To be useful*, and this is a feast.

(4.) *It will yield satisfaction in death, and, through grace, crowned with glory*, as the prize of the high calling, etc.

APPLICATION.

- 1st. Be thankful that you may become a disciple.
- 2d. What thou doest, do quickly ; life is short — death is at hand.
- 3d. Maintain the character of a disciple, sit at the feet of the Master, and learn of Him.

THE WEDDING GARMENT.

"And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to his servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." — MATT. 22: 11-13.

THE Parable exhibits the riches of God's grace in providing for the spiritual wants of men. It is called a feast; and the description of the preparation, verse 4, indicates the substantiality and suitability of the feast. Gospel preparations were prophesied of as a feast, Isa. 25: 6. These preparations are all founded on the death of Christ — *the sacrifice of himself*. In him there is a *fulness* of those spiritual blessings which sinners require — a sufficiency to fill every hungry soul with good things. The provision is such as vile sinners had no reason to expect; but such as it becomes the King of glory to give. He gives like himself — he gives even himself to be the *El-shaddai* to them — *a God that is enough* — a rich, full, and glorious feast for the soul.

The blessings of the Gospel were designed to be *enjoyed in fellowship*. Hence persons were called from "the highways," etc. "The great (Gospel) trumpet is blown, and they who are ready to perish, come" into the banqueting house, and eat the hidden manna, and drink the wine of the kingdom — they are "blessed with all spiritual blessings," etc.

However, all are not Israel who are called Israel — all are not acceptable guests who pretend to be. None can be accepted *without a Wedding Garment*. — It is awful to attempt to impose upon God. In all ages some have entered the church who had no business there. Hence the text.

I. THE WEDDING GARMENT.

The expression alludes to the custom of Eastern Sovereigns to confer a robe of office for admission to their presence. On the marriage of a king's son, this was especially the case. The Eastern monarchs having large wardrobes for presents, and for such purposes were capable of meeting all such exigencies. The wedding dresses were of

the most magnificent kind, and the meanest person would resent with indignation an unsuitable appearance on such a momentous occasion.*

On these circumstances, Christ has founded the instructive parable, showing the *folly* of depending for salvation on our *own righteousness*, "*filthy rags*," and rejecting those robes of *righteousness* "*washed and made clean in the blood of the Lamb*."

If the Gospel be the wedding feast, then the wedding garment must be that *spiritual attire* necessary for true fellowship with saints on earth, and with them and Christ in heaven.

1st. It implies a *conviction of the necessity* of partaking of the feast, and of having on this wedding garment as a qualification for such a participation.

2d. It implies *compliance* with all the terms proposed by the master of the feast. The penitent sinner responds to the invitation—he comes to the feast—he casts aside his filthy garments—he is clothed afresh—the wedding garment is put on by faith—and he esteems it as infinitely superior to his former raiment.

This change is effected by


(1.) *Justification*, by which he is delivered from guilt and condemnation. Rom. 5 : 1 ; 8 : 1. It is beautifully described also by Paul's reference to Abraham. Rom. 4 : 20–25. The sinner's faith is also imputed to him for righteousness. The law has no charge against him—he is free—and God now regards him as innocent. Rom. 8 : 25, 26 ; 9 : 10 ; and therefore he triumphs. Rom. 8 : 33, 34.

(2.) This transformation is also effected by *regeneration*. Born again—renewed in the spirit of the mind—putting off the old man. Eph. 4 : 22–24. Hence he walks worthy of his vocation, Eph. 4, as becomes the Gospel of Christ. Phil. 1 : 27.

This state of justification, etc., the Scriptures frequently represent as a garment. "I put on righteousness, and it clothed me, my judgment was as a robe, and a diadem." Job. 29 : 14. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in God, for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness ; as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels." Isa. 61 : 19. David thus describes the splendor and privileges of God's church : "The King's daughter is all glorious within ; her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework," etc. Ps. 45 : 13, 14. When the Prodigal returned, his Father said, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him ; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." To the lukewarm church of Laodicea, Christ said, "I counsel thee to

* In the East, long white robes were worn at festivals ; and those who were destitute of them were deemed censurable and worthy of punishment. Christ seems to allude to Zeph. 1 : 7, 8, "*The Lord hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bidden his guests. And it shall come to pass, in the day of the Lord's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel.*" The person who invited the guests prepared such a garment for each, for the time being, and with which he was furnished on his application to the ruler of the feast. It was this which made the conduct of the person mentioned in the text so inexcusable ; he might have had a proper marriage garment if he had applied for it.—Dr. A. CLARKE.

buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and *white raiment* that thou mayest be clothed, that the shame," etc. Rev. 3 : 18. The church triumphant are so described. Rev. 7 : 9, 18, etc. This will distinguish the final and eternal marriage of the Lamb with the church, his bride. See Rev. 19 : 6, 7, 8, etc.

 Such is the "*Wedding Garment*." What a glorious robe! it was purchased by a great price—the Saviour's blood—and constitutes the sinner acceptable to God.


"Tis he adorned my naked soul, And made salvation mine; Upon a poor polluted worm, He makes his grace to shine.	"And lest the shadow of a spot Should on my soul be found, He took the robe the Saviour wrought, And cast it all around."
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
"Jesus, thy blood and righteousness," etc. etc.

Remember that this "wedding garment" distinguishes the true Christian from the false: this is certain. It is not mere outward conduct that is implied; for this would be discovered by the guests as well as by the King. It is the inward state of the heart—the disposition towards God. "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation," etc. "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly," etc.

II. THE SOLEMN INSPECTION AND SCRUTINY.

1st. *This inspection and scrutiny was performed by the King.* "When the King came in to see," etc. Imagine you see the banquet—all the guests are assembled—all are anticipating high enjoyment—it is now announced the King is approaching—all are anticipating his approbation. The door opens—he enters—and his approving eye passes from one guest to another till it fixes upon one who, in an essential point, differs from the rest—he is not clothed as the occasion requires, and as custom prescribes. The King regards him as an intruder—he disgraces the entertainment—he has no business there.

The King of heaven scrutinizes the Church now, and he will especially at the day of judgment. What a solemn scrutiny! "I am he that searcheth the heart." "All things are naked," etc. "I know the things that come to your mind, yea, every one of them." See Rev. 2 : 1, 2. He walks among the seven golden candlesticks—his eyes are as a flame of fire.—"Whither shall I go from thy spirit," etc. Ps. 139 : 7-12. Amos 9 : 2, 3, 4.  The eye of Omniscience fixes upon us, and there is no deceiving him. We may impose upon man, but not upon God—therefore let no one attempt to deceive him—he sees you now—investigates you now.

Let us beware of *judging* one another, leaving the matter to him whose judgment is according to truth. As in the parable, no one judged the robeless man, but let the matter wait till the arrival of the King—so must we, in many cases, as it is the province of the King to detect the hypocrite.  In the procedure of the Almighty, mercy rejoiceth against judgment. Why, therefore, dost thou judge thy brother, or why dost thou set at nought thy brother, for we shall all stand at the judgment seat of Christ?

A man may engage in the service of God with the faith which can remove mountains; with an intelligence which almost understands all mysteries; with a zeal which courts martyrdom for Christ's sake, and with the abstraction of a recluse, — yet, if he hath not charity, he is nothing.

2d. *This investigation was personal.* The assembly was not scrutinized as a whole; that scrutiny more immediately concerned each individual. The "wedding garment" of my friend—my brother—my father, etc., will not avail for me. That robe must cover *my immortal spirit*. Though I had patriarchs and martyrs, etc., for my ancestors—though I belong to the holiest nation, sect, church, or family, it will avail me nothing. My own deeds—my own state here, will decide my eternal destiny. The eye of the King will fix upon *me*—*the soul is transparent* to him even now, etc. etc.

III. THE DETECTION.

The result of the scrutiny was the discovery of the man "without a wedding garment," etc.

Not all who appear desirous of enjoying the feast have on the wedding garment. The parable indeed describes but *one* such intruder; this, however, must not be applied too closely. It does not intimate a *rare occurrence*; but that, though there were but few, they could not on that account escape detection; nay, were there only one, he would surely be detected by the piercing eye of God. "He had not on," etc. What a spectacle! How distinct from the rest!

Why do not persons avail themselves of this spiritual attire?

1st. It is frequently the result of *ignorance*. They know not the nature of Christ's kingdom, and they rush in with a mind not prepared to conform to his laws, etc.

2d. It is frequently the result of *pride*. Even as the man in the parable might think his own raiment superior to the prepared robe, so sinners will not part with their good works, as they call them—they will not (like the Jews) submit to the soul-humbling requirements of the Gospel.

3d. It is sometimes the result of *impure motives*. The wedding garment is lost sight of by those who enter the Church to promote their trade—gain a companion for life—gain official honor, etc.; and these motives, which are paramount, cause them to rush into the Church without the requisite spiritual garb. Awful infatuation!

4th. It frequently arises from *carelessness*. The mind is full of the world—trade, etc. etc.—the wedding garment is not properly estimated—they think not of eternity.

IV. THE SOLEMN TRIAL.

"Friend, how camest thou in hither," etc.

Having intruded, he promised himself much pleasure; but his hopes were fatally disappointed. He was awakened by an inquiry from a quarter he did not expect; "Friend," etc. How great his surprise and

terror at the discovery of his situation! The question at once revealed his guilt, and called upon him for a reason.

1st. *His trial was public.* Before all the guests and attendants. So the trial of the sinner and the hypocrite will be before "all nations," — the whole world assembled, thousands of angels, etc.

2d. The title with which he was addressed was heartrending, very cutting; "*Friend!*" An apparent friend—a pretended friend—a professing friend, but in reality an enemy.

3d. *He was put on his own defence.* "How camest thou," etc. What canst thou say in thy defence? Didst thou not know that thou wert required to have on a wedding garment, and that to come without one was an insult to the King? Didst thou imagine that thy conduct would not be discovered and punished? "How," etc. Give an account of thy conduct, etc.

So will it be at the last day. "How," etc. How couldst thou call thyself a Christian, when thou wouldst not submit to my laws, believe in my Son as thy ransom? Didst thou imagine I could be deceived—that I would be mocked with the lips, while the heart was far from me? Didst thou come to insult the entertainment and the entertainer? Didst thou prefer thine own raiment to mine? etc. Didst thou imagine that because neither the guests nor the servants resisted thy intrusion, that there was nothing to dread from me?

4th. *He was convicted and overwhelmed with shame.* "He was speechless." The original means, he was gagged, muzzled. 1 Cor. 9: 9. The man stood mute; his guilty conscience stopped his mouth; he was exposed, confounded — had nothing to say.

They who live within the Church, and die without Christ, will not have one word to say for themselves when God shall examine them. Luke 13: 26. They will have no excuse.——the garment was freely offered to them, "Hearken to me, ye that are stout-hearted," etc. O Jerusalem, wilt thou be made clean, when shall it once be? "The Spirit and the Bride," etc.

V. THE DREADFUL SENTENCE.

"Bind him," etc.

1st. *He is ordered to be bound or manacled as a condemned malefactor.* He is reduced to a helpless state.—The angels at the end of the world will be commissioned to gather out of the kingdom all things that offend, and to bind them in bundles. The sinner cannot deliver himself—all resistance will be in vain.

2d. *He is ordered to be removed from the place of entertainment.* "Take him away." He has seen the rich entertainment provided, but let him not partake. O the loss the sinner will sustain at last! Take him away from the King—from the kingdom—from the feast of immortal pleasure. All those splendid realities will be forfeited. "Take him away."

3d. *The punishment to be inflicted.* "Cast him into outer darkness."

The Jewish marriages were performed in the night season, amid superb illumination; the *outer darkness* means, therefore, the darkness outside of the festal hall; rendered still more gloomy to the person who was suddenly thrust out into it from such a profusion of light.

Hell is utter darkness, it is darkness outside of heaven, the land of light—blackness of darkness—chains of darkness. All such expressions denote the future abode of the wicked.

The consequence of this is “weeping and gnashing of teeth.”—*Weeping* is expressive of great sorrow and anguish; and *gnashing of teeth*, of the greatest torment and indignation. The retrospect of their life of folly and infatuation will cause this; and the terrible interminable future will cause them to gnash their teeth.

APPLICATION.

1. Have we on this wedding garment?
2. Be thankful that it may yet be obtained.
3. Be not deceived with mere profession, or formal worship.
4. Those who have on the wedding garment now will soon come to the heavenly banquet, and the Redeemer's banner over them will be love.

SALVATION.

“For whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord, shall be saved.”—ROM. 10:13.

THE Bible is full of encouragement to the sinner, so that he has no need to despair.——If such gracious and free provision be neglected, the sinner will be left without excuse.——In the text and context, the Apostle declares the plainness of the way of salvation, as taught by him and his colleagues in the Apostleship, verses 6–8. And to give his representation the greater weight, he borrows the words of Moses, Deut. 30: 11–13.——Considering the vast importance of our salvation, it is a great mercy that God has spoken to man on this subject in so plain a manner——Consider,

1st. *Salvation in its import.*

Salvation implies misery, wretchedness, danger, exposure to punishment or death, and *deliverance* from the same.

It is strikingly illustrated by the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage, Exod. 14: 13. See also Ps. 106: 8–10. The deliverance of the Israelites is also expressed in Isa. 63: 8, 9.——When David slew Goliath, “The Lord wrought salvation in Israel.” 1 Sam. 11: 13. When the Israelites slew the Philistines, it is added, “The Lord saved them by a great salvation.” 1 Chron. 11: 14.

In a spiritual sense, as expressed in the New Testament, salvation means that deliverance from everlasting condemnation to
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which sin has exposed the sinner; and this deliverance is represented as effected by the incarnation, sufferings, and death of Jesus Christ. — It is the salvation of the immortal soul. — This is its import.

2d. *Salvation is necessary.* Man is a fallen being—has lost the image of God. He is disobedient and rebellious. As a breaker of the law of God he is condemned, Gal. 3 : 10.

The curse of the divine law lies upon him, and every moment the sentence may be executed by his soul being summoned hence, and consigned to everlasting perdition, as the just desert of his transgressions. There is but a step between a sinner and death. He is ready to perish.

From this state *he cannot deliver himself.*—The sinner must be made sensible of this, or the Gospel will be a repulsive system to him. It will be like offering alms to the wealthy, or announcing liberty to those who are free, or entering a house to cough the eye of a man who can see. —

3d. *Salvation has been procured.* By the coming of Christ, his incarnation—his sacrifice on the cross. —“Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.” The design of his coming was to secure salvation. See Luke 4 : 18 ; John 3 : 16. “The Son of man is come to seek,” etc. “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” When he uttered his last shout, “It is finished,” then “mercy and truth met,” etc., God was honored, his law magnified, and justice satisfied, and man emancipated from condemnation and death,—all spiritual blessings are now communicated, for

4th. *Salvation is unrestricted.* “Whosoever shall call upon,” etc. It is evident from this and other similar phraseology that God’s love is universal—that as all are ruined and need salvation, so the scheme of redeeming mercy is offered to all.

(1.) There is no *national restriction*. True, it was first preached to the Jews. See the argument of the Apostle : Acts 13 : 46 ; 28 : 28. The Gospel, in glory, far exceeds the law, which was confined to one nation. — “Go preach the Gospel to every creature,” Mark 16 : 15. See Luke 24 : 47.

(2.) *It is not confined to sex or age.* See Gal. 3 : 28. — “Out of the mouths of babes,” etc., and the aged transgressor may yet be saved.

(3.) *It is not limited to rank or condition.* It reaches to persons of every circumstance. The rich and the poor, the master and the servant, the prince and the peasant, the Barbarian and the Scythian, the bond and the free : Col. 3 : 11, Come, then, ye rich, ye poor, etc. Isa. 66 : 1, 2. “Him that cometh unto me,” etc.

(4.) *The difference in mental ability or requirements offers no obstacle.* Paul was a debtor both to the wise and the unwise. See Rom. 1 : 14, 16. If the highly-gifted man, the learned man, the philosopher, will

be converted, and become as little children, and believe in Christ crucified, the door of heaven will open for them. Some of the greatest and wisest of men have done this, as Newton, Locke, Boyle, Sir W. Jones, etc., etc. And, as for the illiterate, the Gospel, on account of its plainness and simplicity, just suits their case. Matt. 11 : 25, 26.

(5.) *As the excellency of moral conduct destroys not the necessity of this salvation, so the malignancy of a sinner's course of rebellion will not exclude him from Divine mercy.* You who have had pious parents—have been morally educated and restrained, and possess many moral excellencies, you need this salvation.——The vilest of the vile may come. The Jews who crucified Christ; the Greeks who were slaves to idolatry—the Greeks who, etc., Eph. 4 : 19. No sins are of too deep a dye for the blood of Christ to wash away. 1 Tim. 1 : 15; Matt. 12 : 31; Rom. 5 : 20; 1 Cor. 6 : 11.

5th. *Salvation is attainable.* The way is pointed out—"call upon the Name of the Lord." This is expressive of faith, and the application of faith for salvation. Observe,

(1.) *The Name of the Lord is the object of faith.* Paul refers to Joel 2 : 32, and the "Lord," answers to the prophet's word "*Jehovah*," a proof of the Deity of Christ. If the text be translated "*Whosoever shall invoke in the name of the Lord*," which the Hebrew will certainly bear, yet still the term *Jehovah* is given to Christ, because *invoking in the name* means petitioning one in the name or on account of another. He who is invoked is God—the God of salvation.——He, in whose name he is invoked, is Jesus Christ, the mediator, etc.

(2.) *The means of obtaining.* "*Whosoever shall call*," etc. It is the *prayer of faith*. See 5 : 11. Faith believes all the promises of grace. Faith calls, prays for the fulfilment of those promises, etc.——Observe. This prayer of faith is the result of a *deep sense of spiritual danger*. This must be realized, and then there will be earnest believing prayer.

(3.) *The certainty of the promise.* "*Shall be saved*." "*As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure*," etc. All his promises rest upon his immutable truth. God cannot deny himself. Witness the specimens of his saving power. Look up to heaven—see there the blood-bought myriads—listen to their triumphant song, "*Unto him*," etc.

6th. *This salvation is replete with interest, and connected with eternal glory!* Is not emancipation from condemnation—from the vengeance of everlasting fire, interesting?——Ask that criminal just respited from an ignominious death, if his respite is not interesting. Ask that man just rising from the bed of sickness and pain—to restored health, etc., etc.

Salvation implies *pardon*, blotting out the sins as a cloud, etc.,—*justification*, by which a sinner is free from condemnation, and regarded by heaven as an innocent being.——*Renovation of heart*——*Adoption into the family of God*. "*The Spirit itself beareth witness*," etc. "*And because ye are sons*," etc. Gal. 4 : 6.——*victory over death, and eternal life in heaven*. Heb. 2 : 14, 15, and also 5 : 10.——"*Christ shall appear the second time without sin (a sin-offering) unto salvation*," Heb. 9 : 28 to consummate the salvation of his people; which consum-

mation in glory the most eloquent language cannot describe. No imagery is sufficiently graphic—no language, no thought can point out the rapture, the glorious effulgence, the magnificence and bliss of this salvation. It is the “salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” 2 Tim. 2:10. This glory, as enjoyed in heaven, is inconceivable.

“Eye hath not seen its blessed employ,
 Ear hath not heard its deep songs of joy;
 Dreams cannot picture a world so fair,
 Sorrow and death cannot enter there;
 Time doth not breathe on its fadeless bloom,
 Far beyond the clouds, and beyond the tomb,
 The clime of salvation is there.”

Is not this salvation *interesting*? It is so to angels and all good men. The song of heaven is salvation; the inhabitants of heaven are the saved; the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end of heaven is salvation. Salvation shines in every ray of its glory. Salvation pulsates in every motion of its heart, circulates through every vein of its existence, and is inhaled in every breath of its atmosphere. Salvation flows along all the streams of its refreshment, and blooms in every flower of its beauty. Salvation radiates in all the constellations of its firmament, and sparkles in every gem of its crowns. Salvation constitutes the harmony of every string of its golden harps, and is the melody of its unmeasurable spheres. Salvation rings along the resounding echoes of its ever rolling, ever happy, ever triumphant eternity. Is it not *replete with interest*?

✚ Christ purchased salvation for sinners, just because *no other* could purchase it—and he *bestowed it freely* because it exceeds all price. When the value of Christ's blood has been calculated, when eternity ceases to roll, when the fires of perdition are extinguished, and when the everlasting joys of heaven are exhausted and done, *then*, but not till *then*, can a full estimate be formed of the worth of that salvation which the Holy One of Israel bestows gratuitously on the *poor* as well as on the *rich*.

APPLICATION.

- 1st. Be thankful for salvation, its freeness and its universal application.
- 2d. Unbelievers will be left without excuse.

DIVINE COMFORT.

“As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.” — Isa. 66:13.

THE condescending love of God to sinners is most wonderful. — Though he is the High and Lofty One, etc., Isa. 57:15; 66:1, yet he knows, pities, and cares for worms of the earth, sinful, frail, dying man.

Human language is insufficient to express the Divine compassion. *Though the most striking metaphors, etc., have been adopted by the*

sacred writers, they do but imperfectly express it.——The chapter is pregnant with important events——refers to the time of Christ and his apostles. Stephen applies verse 1 to the dismantling of the Temple by the planting of the Christian Church. Acts 7 : 49, 50.——Bishop Lowth refers this chapter to the reprobation of the Jews——their destruction by the Romans——the calling of the Gentiles——and the establishment of the Christian dispensation, full of mercy and love. (See verses preceding the text.)

Observe,

I. BELIEVERS ARE FREQUENTLY PLACED IN CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH THEY NEED THE COMFORT OF THEIR DIVINE PARENT. Yes, from the birth of their spiritual life to its consummation in glory, they can never be independent of Divine Comfort.——They are called "*babes in Christ*," and that term is indicative of what they need.

(1.) As *babes* they are *weak* and *helpless*. Even as a child comes into the world, *naked*, *helpless*, and *crying*, so the sinner when he is *born again*, is "*naked*, *wretched*," and *mourns for sin*, cries out in distress for mercy. "*Blessed are they that mourn*," etc., Matt. 5 : 4. See Zech. 12 : 10.——They therefore need the arm of Omnipotence to uphold and defend them, and the bosom of Infinite Love to nourish and sustain them.

(2.) They are *ignorant*, and require to be taught of God, by his Spirit——must in God's school be made wise unto salvation.

(3.) They are liable to *error*. Sometimes deceived by the crafty——go astray——decline in spirituality, and are occasionally in spiritual darkness.——They need comfort.

(4.) They are subject to *spiritual* conflicts, arising from the flesh——Satan——the world with its allurements, its smiles and frowns, its cares and anxieties——from wicked, persecuting men,——afflictions——bereavements——death——they therefore need comfort.

II. GOD IS THE SOURCE OF COMFORT TO HIS PEOPLE. "I will comfort you." He is called the "God of all comfort." See 2 Cor. 1 : 3, 4. Also, "he comforteth those that are cast down." 2 Cor. 7 : 7. See Isa. 51 : 12, 13 ; 49 : 13 ; 52 : 9.——In accordance with this view, he has provided :

A comforting atonement. Rom. 5 : 10, 11 ; Isa. 61 : 2 ; 2 Thess. 2 : 17. This is a comfortable and safe refuge—a hiding place, etc.

A comforting Advocate. "He maketh intercession for us." See 1 John 2 : 1 ; Heb. 7 : 25.

A comforting spirit, to enlighten, quicken, guide, witness, sanctify, seal. John 14 : 16 ; 16 : 7, 13 ; Rom. 8 : 14–16, 26 : Gal. 5 : 20.



His comforting presence ; "Where two or three," etc. "In all places," etc. John 14 : 23. "*Fear thou not*, for I am with thee," etc.

His comforting Word and Promises, they are "a lamp unto the

feet," etc.——"exceeding precious." "This is my comfort in my affliction; for thy word hath quickened me." Ps. 119 : 50.

Comforting Hope of Glory. "In my father's house," etc. See 1 Pet. 1 : 3, 4; 5 : 4.

Comforting Privileges and Ordinances. As prayer—communion—preaching—baptism—Christian fellowship—the Lord's Supper.

 This comfort is superior to all human comfort. It is pure—disinterested—suitable—*meets every case*—( refer to those cases under Division I.) He will comfort his children in every state, wherever placed, and at any time. When billow after billow rolls upon them, when temptations come in like a flood, he is there.——In youth, in the troubles of life, in sickness, in old age, in death, he is there as their Comforter.

III. THAT DIVINE COMFORT IS MOST ENDEARING AND EFFICIENT.
"As one whom his mother comforteth," etc.

This is a beautiful and striking comparison. No other relationship can so expressively represent the parental kindness of God. The true friend loveth at all times—brothers and sisters often dearly love, and the life of the father is frequently bound up in the life of the child, but a mother is the greatest and most tender comforter. Solicitude for the welfare of her children follows her through life, and often rushes upon her mind, even amid the reflections and prospects of her dying hour.——

Hast thou sounded the depth of yonder sea,
And counted the sands that under it be?
Hast thou measured the height of Heaven above?
Then mayst thou mete out a mother's love.

Hast thou talked with the blest of leading on
To the throne of God some wandering son?
Hast thou witnessed the angels' bright employ?
Then mayst thou speak of a mother's joy.

There is not a grand inspiring thought,
There is not a truth by wisdom taught,
There is not a feeling pure and high,
That may not be read in a mother's eye.

There are teachings on earth, and sky, and air,
The heavens the glory of God declare!
But more loud than the voice beneath, above,
He is heard to speak through a mother's love.

He will comfort his people.

1st. *With all the affection and solicitude of a mother.* See the mother how she loves, strives, labors, suffers, and sacrifices for her child.——See the love of God. "Behold what manner of love," etc. "To as many," etc. John 1 : 12. He sees his image there, and loves.

A mother watches over and defends her child. So does our heavenly Father. "He upholds," etc.,—a wall of fire—a refuge—a strong tower, etc. etc. Isa. 54 : 17.

A mother is solicitous to provide for her child, etc. So "My God shall supply all," etc. "He careth for you," etc. etc.

2d. *With all the long-suffering and forbearance of a mother.* — God knoweth our frame. Rom. 2 : 4 ; 3 : 25 ; Ps. 103 : 8-10 ; Jer. 31 : 20.

3d. *With all the forgiveness and consolation of a mother.* How ready to forgive her erring, wandering child ! how ready to console in trouble ! — Isa. 40 : 1, 2 ; 12 : 1 ; 49 : 13 ; 57 : 18.

4th. *With all the instruction and correction of a mother.* A good and wise mother will instruct and also correct. — God teaches in various ways, and whom he loveth he chasteneth. Deut. 32 : 9 ; Heb. 12 : 6, etc.

5th. *With all the constancy of a mother.* When does the love of a mother end ? — Isa. 49 : 14, 15, etc. — loves to the end.

IV. THAT THIS COMFORT IS SPECIALLY IMPARTED IN THE HOUSE OF GOD. "In Jerusalem." This name is often used to denote the church of Christ. Isa. 40 : 2, 9 ; 52 : 1, 2 ; etc. etc.

1st. *It is the place appointed for his people to wait for and receive comfort.*

2d. *It is the place where he delights to dwell and meet his people.*

3d. *It is there where his Spirit is poured out to comfort.*

4th. *The performance of holy Duties there also yields comfort.* Praise, prayer, hearing, etc. etc.

APPLICATION.

1st. Are we the children of God ?

2d. Have we sensible tokens of his comfort ?

3d. How terrible must be his frown !

ETERNAL LIFE.

"Lay hold on eternal life." — 1 TIM. 6 : 12.

THIS subject is pre-eminently important — one in which you are concerned, and it deserves supreme attention. — It can only be found in the Gospel ; — how empty, then, are all systems of human philosophy !

There is something peculiarly solemn in the advice of an aged Christian, or one eminent for piety, to a young convert. — So in the case of Moses ; Christ's last discourse with his disciples ; Paul's advice to Timothy, in the preceding verses. He advises him to "fight the good fight of faith," under the assurance that his conflict would terminate in victory. "Eternal life" he would realize as the prize of his high calling, etc.

I. THE OBJECT OF THE CHRISTIAN'S CONFLICT : "ETERNAL LIFE."

"Life," as used in the Scriptures, is a very significant word. It is frequently expressive of all possible good. To "have" this life, implies an interest in the Divine favor, assimilation to God — the possession of the Holy Spirit. John 6 : 35, etc.; 20 : 31. In fact, it is the very opposite of *condemnation, guilt, alienation from God*, etc. etc.

"Eternal Life" is the perpetuation of this spiritual life in another world, refined, consummated — the full and uninterrupted enjoyment of God, and the vision of his glory through interminable ages. Hence observe,

1st. Eternal Life is *not merely a perpetuity of existence*. Demons and apostate spirits have perpetual existence, but not eternal life.

2d. Eternal Life being *the gift of God* implies that we have *forfeited it by sin* — and that it can never be obtained by our own obedience.

3d. That Eternal Life is *bestowed upon sinners through the meditation of Christ*. 1 John 5 : 11. "He became the Author," etc. Heb. 5 : 9; Rom. 6 : 23; John 4 : 14; 6 : 40. It is then in him only; "Lord, to whom shall we go," etc. Not to Moses, duties, ordinances, sacrifices — graces. It is not in repentance, faith, etc. John 17 : 3; 1 John 5 : 20.

Eternal Life has a *future aspect*. It will be realized in heaven. It is said, "God has prepared for us a city," etc. — there is in reserve an inheritance, a kingdom, a crown, an eternal Weight of Glory, etc. John 14 : 1, etc.; 2 Cor. 5 : 1; Matt. 25 : 46; Heb. 11 : 16; James 1 : 12.

It implies,

1. *Union of body and soul* by a glorious resurrection from the dead, that the whole man, purified, immortalized, may enjoy it. The soul enters into the possession of this life subsequently to death; "Absent from the body," etc., but the salvation of the believer will not be completed till the resurrection morning.

2. *The absence of all evil*, and therefore it will be a life of perfect happiness. No sin — no curse — no effects of sin, as bodily decay, and sickness, and bereavements. — No death — no grave and corruption. By any of these that life of exquisite bliss will never be interrupted. "The inhabitant shall never say, I am sick." See Rev. 7 : 15-17; 21 : 4-7, 25, 27.

3. *Divine manifestation*. "They shall see God;" Matt. 5 : 8; 1 John 3 : 2 — they shall be "present with Christ." See John 17 : 24.

"Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, *that they may behold my glory*." And what glory is this? It is the glory of Jehovah in the face of Jesus Christ. For God shows his glory there, as he does his grace here, through Jesus Christ. All the glory of the Father — all the glory of the angels — all the glory of the saints — all the glory of Paradise, are concentrated in the Sun of Righteousness. "I will show thee all the glory of Greece," said an an-

sient to his friend; and so saying, he took him to Solon, the Spartan lawgiver. "And is this all?" said his friend. "Yes," replied the ancient, "when thou hast seen Solon, thou hast seen all." And so when the saints see Christ, they see all the glory of heaven in him; "the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne is the light thereof." But what must it be to see this glory?

4. *A life of increased and still increasing knowledge.* Mysteries of creation, providence, and grace, will be explained by the God of Light. 1 Cor. 13: 12. The capacity will be expanded, the understanding matured—Jehovah will be seen as he is—bodies known as they are—spirits comprehended—mysteries developed, their cause explained, and their consequences unfolded.

5. *Life of blessed companionship.* With angels and perfected spirits—patriarchs, prophets, apostles, etc., departed friends. Then heaven will be the *Scene of Mutual Recognition*. The family of God will know each other there. 2 Cor. 4: 14; 2 Thess. 2: 1; 1 Thess. 2: 19, 20; Col. 1: 28.*

6. All this freedom from evil, and possession of glory, is crowned with eternal perpetuity. It is "ETERNAL LIFE."

Duration gives importance, swells the price;
An angel, if a creature of a day,
What would he be? A trifle of no weight:
Or stand, or fall, no matter where he's gone.

Most of the Scriptural representations of heaven have connected with them certain adjectives which convey the idea of eternity.

Whatever, therefore, shall be the employments of the citizens of heaven: whether it be meditation upon the works, the attributes of Deity, or conversing upon the wonders of creative wisdom, and the reign of Jehovah's grace; whether it be admiring or adoring the ineffable glories of the Godhead, or uniting with ten thousand times ten thousand angels in one grand chorus to the praise of him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb; they shall never be exhausted with fatigue, never be languid in their energies, never require a repose for the renewal of their strength. Eternity is the duration of their being—eternity is the perpetuity of their undiminished powers—eternity is the consummation of their desires—the completion of their highest hopes, and the stability of their best inheritance. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3: 16. "For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." 2 Cor. 5: 1. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen, are eternal." 2 Cor. 4: 17, 18. "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly, into the ever-

* See "Pearls of Great Price," by the Author, on Mutual Recognition.

lasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 1: 11. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out." Rev. 3: 12. "Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." Isa. 60: 20.

II. What is implied in "laying hold on eternal life"? It refers to the termination of the Christian conflict. When the race is run; when the battle is over, and the enemy vanquished, then shall he come to the goal, and the hand of Almighty love will bestow the crown of endless life, and through grace, and with the highest gratitude, the believer will "lay hold on it." The Christian conflict will have a good issue. This implies,

1. *Faith in the Divine Testimony* respecting Eternal Life. Heathens, philosophers, etc., have had vague notions without the Gospel.

2. *Faith in Christ* who bestows and prepares for it. "He that believeth," etc.—Experimental acquaintance with the Gospel—resting on Christ—separation from the world.

3. Actual engagement in Christian duties and conflict. See the preceding verses. Striving for it, running, pressing forwards, etc.

4. By realizing and feeding upon the promises respecting it. "Looking for that blessed hope," etc., frequently anticipating it—cheered with the prospect. Be not satisfied with present attainments. Behold the Paradise before you! If the famous Carthaginian general, Hannibal, could inspire his troops with so much courage by a prospect of the plains of Italy from the barren Alps, which they were passing, how much more animated should Christians become with the prospect of Eternal Life!

APPLICATION.

1. See the wisdom of Christians in laboring to lay hold on Eternal Life.

2. The folly of sinners. They lay hold of phantoms, shadows, and neglect the substance.

THE EXCELLENCY OF GOD'S LOVING-KINDNESS.

"How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house: and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures."—PSALM 36: 7, 8.

THE Psalmist having been shocked with the contemplation of the wickedness of sinners, verse 1-4, turns with delight to the goodness of God—a subject as delightful as the former was distasteful, and very proper to be placed in the balance against it, verse 5-10.

I. THE SUBJECT OF THE TEXT: "Thy loving-kindness, O God."

The Psalmist frequently uses this term throughout the Psalms. See also Jer. 31 : 3 ; Hosea 2 : 19 ; Isa. 63 : 7.

The loving-kindness of God is that gracious affection which he manifests to his creatures throughout nature, providence, and grace. The term is very striking. It is not merely kindness, but loving-kindness ; it is expressive of strong and tender endearment, which by some scripture is illustrated and expressed by a reference to the various relationships of life—as a father, "Like as a father," etc., and a brother, friend, bridegroom, and bride, etc., etc. Observe,

1st. This Loving-kindness has been manifested,

(1.) *In creation.* All his works praise him, and proclaim his goodness to man.

(2.) *In Providence.* What provision has been made for all creatures ! — His loving-kindness appears in the order and regularity of all things—the budding spring—the fruitful summer—the productive autumn—and the fur-clad winter.—God is the Saviour of all men, but especially of them that believe. He watches over them, cares for them, guides and preserves them, etc. Matt. 6 : 25, 26.—Even dark and afflictive dispensations frequently indicate his loving-kindness.

(3.) *In grace.* His loving-kindness led him to make that rich and abundant provision for us in the Gospel. See Titus 3 : 4, 6. Throughout the Bible the Gospel of our salvation is represented as the fruit of Divine love. Hosea 11 : 4 ; John 3 : 16 ; Rom. 5 : 8 ; 1 John 4 : 7-10.

2d. *This loving-kindness is felt or experienced,*

(1.) *In Conversion.* In calling poor sinners, restoring them, bringing them home, turning from darkness, etc. See Paul's conversion, etc. What loving-kindness !

(2.) *In reconciliation and adoption.* He abundantly pardons—gives power to become the sons of God. Acts 13 : 38, 39 ; John 1 : 12 ; Gal. 4 : 4-6 ; 1 John 3 : 1, 2. Amazing loving-kindness !

(3.) *In Christian fellowship and communion with God.* See Eph. 2 : 19, etc. ; 1 John 1 : 3, 7.

(4.) *In Ordinances and Promises.* Preaching, praise, prayer, Baptism, the Lord's Supper. There the promises are fulfilled. What a treasury of wealth and glory in those promises !

(5.) *It will be seen and felt in Heaven.* Little do we know and feel here ; but when that which is perfect is come, etc.

II. ITS EXCELLENCY. "How excellent," etc. The Psalmist expresses his feelings in the way of admiration. "How excellent !" It is an indefinite exclamation. Its excellency neither men nor angels can adequately define. It is indescribably excellent, abundant, and free.—The exclamation implies that believers relish it ; they taste a transcendent sweetness in it ; it is precious to them ; they admire God's beauty and goodness above anything in this world.—Its excellency appears,

1st. In being manifested *to the most unworthy*. Sinners, vile sinners — the chief of sinners.

2d. In the multitude of blessings of which it is the source. "All things are yours." "Ye are blessed with all spiritual blessings," etc. It is like the tree of life whose fruit, etc.——Its blessings are *admirably adapted* to the state of man as a sinner. It respects *the soul*, and provides for its wants.

3d. *It gives security in all dangers*, and produces confidence. "Therefore the children of men," etc., 5 : 7. When exposed to peril, they find the "Eternal God as their refuge," etc. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower," etc. They find themselves safe as the chickens under the wings of the hen. Matt. 23 : 37 ; Ruth 2 : 12 ; Ps. 37 : 8 ; 57 : 1 ; 61 : 1 ; 91 : 4.

O glorious privilege of believers ! "They trust," etc. They trust in thy good *providence* for the supply of their *bodies* ; they trust in thy *mercy* for the salvation of their *souls*. These, according to figures, are *the two wings* of the Divine Goodness, under which saints take refuge. Just like the wings of the Cherubim, above the mercy seat.

4th. *It is infinitely satisfying*. "They shall be abundantly satisfied," etc., 5 : 8. They shall be *saturated*, as a thirsty field is by showers from heaven. The Vulgate reads, shall be *inebriated*. —— It is especially in the House of God where the marrow or fatness of the Gospel is dispensed —— there the afflicted —— the tempted —— the persecuted —— the mourner, etc., are satisfied. See John 4 : 14. Fears disperse —— the mind is calmed —— hope is inspired —— peace and joy result. ~~Nothing~~ Nothing human can satisfy like this.

5th. This loving-kindness *is constant*. "He loves his own to the end." "I will never leave," etc.

6th. It is pregnant with prospective blessedness and ineffable glory. —— An interest in it conquers death. "Blessed are the dead," etc. It raises to heaven —— gives an abundant entrance, etc., "and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures," 5 : 8, *or the river of thy Eden*. They shall be restored to their paradisiacal estate ; for there is a reference to the river that ran through the garden of Eden, and watered it. Gen. 2 : 10. See here especially Rev. 22 : 1-5. Here is the consummation of religion —— the salvation of the soul in heaven. See Ps. 16 : 11 ; 17 : 15.

APPLICATION.

1st. Does your experience lead you to admire this loving-kindness ?

2d. If not, it is a proof of slothfulness and barrenness, and calls for repentance.

3d. However much of this loving-kindness you enjoy now, it is but a foretaste.

CHRIST'S GRACIOUS RECEPTION OF SINNERS.

"Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."—JOHN 6 : 37.

THE subject of the text is wonderful ; it is the willingness of Christ to receive and save all penitent sinners. Such willingness to save was the favorite theme of patriarchs and prophets—the delight of primitive Christians, long before Christ came. And every stage of the Redeemer's life on earth, and the glorious statements of his Apostles, confirm the delightful truth that he will never reject the contrite and believing penitent who enters the door of mercy : "he will in no wise cast out."——Such grace will appear wonderful only to those who perceive and feel that they are sinners—contrasting his dignity and glory with their deserts and vast unworthiness, they will be astonished at the riches of his grace. Happy are they who come to Christ in this way!——Those who saw the miracle of feeding five thousand, etc., followed him to see his miracles, and probably to feed upon his bounty. Many *apparently* come to Christ, and it is to be feared their motives are of a selfish and secular character.

I. The Object of approach : Christ—"Him that cometh to me."

Prophets, as inspired by the Spirit, spake of him as the object of the sinner's approach—that around him should throng the sons and daughters of woe. Jacob, when dying, said, "Unto him shall the gathering of the people be." Isaiah said, "Unto him shall men come;" Isa. 45 : 24. "The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising; yea, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee." Isa. 60 : 3, 5. "The great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish." Isa. 27 : 13.

In confirmation of these sayings, Jesus said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." "Come unto me, all ye that labor," etc., and "Him that cometh," etc.

He alone possesses qualifications to relieve our wants. He is *the Saviour*; "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." As a Saviour,

1st. *He is Divine*. He is infinitely wise—he possesses illimitable power—and boundless compassion. Without being Divine, he could not have become a Saviour.—The actions of Christ, his miracles, his predictions, his assertions—his resurrection from the tomb—the declarations of his disciples—the power and existence of truth against all opposition to the present moment, all prove his Divinity. Blessed truth! the Saviour is Divine, and able to save to the very uttermost!——John 1 : 1, 2, etc.

2d. *He became incarnate*. "Manifest in the flesh." Heb. 2 : 14, 15; John 1 : 14, etc.; Phil. 2 : 5-8. His life was holy—he did no sin—left us an example—went about doing good—and then **SUFFERED AND DIED as a sacrifice for man**: "the just for the unjust."

Isa. 53 : 4, 5 ; Gal. 4 : 4, 5 ; and many other passages.——Then he died for us, and procured for sinners all that they want.——He is a *prophet* to teach—a *priest* to atone and intercede—a *physician* to heal—and a *fountain of grace* to supply all our spiritual wants.

II. What is implied in coming to Christ?


Observe, a mere *formal or bodily act* is not intended. Many do this, but come not at all, Isa. 29 : 13 ; Matt. 15 : 8. Jesus said (as he might say now), when the people thronged around him, “Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.”——

It is a spiritual approach—the heart is smitten—the sinner is perishing, and he flies to the refuge—the hiding-place—the covert—the strong tower, etc. Hence,

1. *Conviction of sin and danger* is absolutely necessary. Isa. 27 : 13. “The whole need not,” etc. See the sensibility of the Prodigal ; Luke 15.

2. *With contrition.* Not sorrow merely for the consequences of sin, but from a view of its nature, and the goodness of the Being against whom it is committed—it is that godly sorrow which worketh repentance, etc.—leads to confession, etc.

3. *Faith is necessary.* Coming implies this—a confidence in his ability and willingness—a surrender of all other objects of trust—a reliance upon Christ alone. This faith regards his Divinity—his Sacrifice, etc.——

 All the promised blessings of salvation are connected with faith. [See several Scriptures.]

4. *With earnest and humble prayer.* “God be merciful,” etc. “Lord, save,” etc. Place to my account the sacrifice of thy Son. “Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief.”

III. The Great purposes for which sinners are to come to Christ.

The sinner, convinced of his ignorance, guilt, and wretchedness, comes to Christ,

1. *For instruction*—for Gospel light and knowledge. He is ignorant of himself, of God, of Christ, and of the way of salvation. He prays to be enlightened, directed, and guided.——He only is able to make wise unto salvation. He alone can give sinners to say, “We know that the Son of God is come, and he hath given us an understanding to know him.” 1 John 5 : 20.

2. *For Pardon and Justification.* The sinner needs this ; he is guilty—as a transgressor, is condemned—he is cursed. In Christ there is pardon, and he comes for it. “Whom God hath set forth,” etc. Rom. 3 : 23-26. “In him we have redemption,” etc. See Rom. 8 : 1, etc.

3. *For Peace.* This is the result of pardon, etc. Rom. 5 : 1, etc. Eph. 2 : 14 ; 1 John 3 : 19, 20. “We preach peace through the blood of the cross—Sinai utters not its thunders against the sinner now—conscience is rendered pure—it accuses not.” Heb. 10 : 22.

Dark—dark was the tempest without—
 Keen—keen was the torture within:
 By the terrors of hell I was compassed about—
 I felt them already begin:—
 Despair was advancing, to gnaw
 The spring of my spirit away—
 Each to my sight placed the curse of the law,
 And my sins, in their dreadful array:
 Fear shook me—astonishment sat on my eye,
 While Conscience extorted the heart-rending sigh.

When lo! in that moment of fear,
 Broke mildly, Hope's tremulous ray:
 The accents of mercy fell soft on my ear,
 And thus seemed the seraph to say:
 "Look—look to thy crucified Lord!
 See where he lies bleeding for thee!
 Hark!—"Come, I WILL SAVE THEE!"—Believe on his word;
 Flee—flee to the Refuge—oh, flee!"
 I heard, I obeyed—for his love drew me on—
 I clung to his cross—and my terrors were gone!

4. *For strength.* The sinner has now become a Christian; he has to labor—to run—to fight—to overcome, etc.,—he has to pass through dangers, temptations, afflictions, sorrows, etc.,—he has to strive and to glorify God. But he is naturally weak, etc. "My grace is sufficient," etc. 1 Cor. 12: 9, 10. "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power;" i. e. according to that sufficiency of strength, which may be expected from him who has all power both in, etc. Col. 1: 11. The Apostle prayed that the Ephesians might be "strengthened—in the inner man," Eph. 3: 16.

5. *For victory over death, and the possession of eternal life.* None can die happy without Christ, who extracts the sting of death; none can enter heaven except by him. He gives the power—the title clear.

IV. The certainty of our Acceptance:—"I will in no wise cast out."

The original contains two negatives, *με οὐ μὴ ἐκβάλω ἔξω*, *I will not, no, I will not cast*, etc. One commentator has rendered it, "I will not chase him away from the door of mercy."

The sinner *frequently fears* that he will cast him out. He looks at his *meanness*—his vileness—his guilt—his long and aggravated course of iniquity. "Surely," says he, "he will drive me from the door."——Jesus says, "I will not cast out him that truly cometh, let him be whom he may, high or low, rich or poor, young or old, learned or ignorant—a great sinner—the chief of sinners, etc."

Some view their case as *extraordinary*—they have sinned so much—and their hearts are so black, that they will be cast out. But here is the Antidote. "Him," etc. This word *him* comprehends all sinners—yea the worst—the most abominable sinners—liars, drunkards, etc.

"In no wise cast him out." Not by any means, on any account, cast him out. Though he has merited it, deserves it, and dreads it. Only let him come and believe, and I will glorify myself in his salvation. I will receive him graciously, etc. "I will abundantly pardon," etc.

Behold the riches of Divine grace! He will not disdain us, though

we are mean, will not reject us, though we are sinful. Do poor scholars come to him to be taught? though they be dull and slow, he will not cast them out. Do poor patients come to him to be cured? their disease is not so desperate, but he *can* and *will* cure it. Do poor *clients* come to be advised? their case is not so intricate, but he *can* and *will* direct them, though they come empty-handed — having nothing to pay with, *he will in no wise cast them out.*

But what proof can be advanced in support of his willingness to save?

1st. To save sinners was *the grand design of his advent.* "He came to seek and to save that which was lost." "This is a faithful saying," etc. "Ye know the grace," etc. For this he suffered, and bled, and died. —

2d. *The Divine fulness of Grace* he possesses is a proof of this. "In him all fulness dwells;" fulness of light, as a *Prophet*—fulness of love and merit as a *Priest*—of care and tenderness as a *Shepherd*, of skill and healing as a *Physician*, of pity and help as the *Good Samaritan*, and of defending and enriching power as a *King*. Such a fulness of *pardon, justification*, etc. etc., makes him the *Great Friend of Sinners.*

3d. *The promises and invitations of Scripture.* Mark their appropriate eloquence and power. "And the Spirit and the Bride," etc. "Ho every one," etc. "Come unto me," etc. "As I live saith the Lord," etc. "Wherefore he is able," etc. "Not willing that any should perish," etc.

4th. *The examples of his saving power*, as exhibited in the Scriptures. There stands a Manasseh — a Magdalene — a Saul of Tarsus, the once filthy, but now purified Corinthians, Ephesians, etc. Beside the Redeemer at Calvary is suspended a dying thief who at first railed at Christ — but his grace reached his heart; faith applied his blood, and a place was allotted to him in Paradise.

APPLICATION.

1. Admire the grace of God.
2. Come to Christ — you will be welcome.
3. If such grace be despised and rejected, woe to the sinner.

GOD, THE PORTION OF HIS PEOPLE.

A METAPHORICAL SKETCH.

"The Lord is the portion of my inheritance, and of my cup." — PSALM 16 : 5. See also PSALM 73 : 26; 119 : 57; 142 : 5; JER. 61 : 19.

THIS passage describes the wealth and happiness of believers, and in that respect their infinitely superior state to that of the wicked.

Portion, or Inheritance, as the word is read, Gen. 31 : 14; 1 Kings,

12:16; is a *Metaphor* taken from earthly portions, or inheritance, which may be considered as follows:

1. Its Nature. 2. Its Extent. 3. Its Qualities. 4. Its Usefulness. Under these considerations it affords matter for the following Parallel.

I. A Portion or Inheritance, is a Gift.

So God hath given himself to be their Portion forever, Lam. 3:24. When he becomes their portion he makes them partakers of the Divine nature, 2 Peter 1:4; and gives them his Holy Spirit, Acts 5:32.

II. A portion or inheritance promotes the honor and interest of the receiver; it raises his dignity, and frees from contempt.

God, as the portion of his people, promotes their honor and interest, for he makes them kings, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, Rom. 8:17; Ps. 45:16; Rev. 5:10. They are free from that *contempt* which the Scriptures cast upon the ungodly, Rev. 3:18, as poor, blind, etc. But the saints are called honorable, etc. 1 Chron. 4:9; Ps. 16:3; Mal. 3:17. They are God's peculiar people, his jewels, etc. Hence their dignity.

III. Portion or inheritance implies *Relation*. Men do not give portions to foreigners, strangers, or enemies, but to natural or adopted relations.

God is not the portion of the wicked, enemies, aliens, the proud, etc.; but of the righteous, his real children. Rom. 8:16, 17; Gal. 3:26; see Deut. 7:7.

IV. A portion or inheritance procures *many friends*. Solomon says, the *Rich* have many friends.

So the saints have many friends. All the angels of heaven are in peace and friendship with them, Ps. 91:7, 12; 34:11; Heb. 1:14. All the saints of God are their friends. Nay, often God makes their enemies to be at peace with them. Prov. 16:7.

V. A great portion makes a man properly to value himself, and not to ally himself with any one unsuitable, and beneath him in station.

So the saint has the best reason for valuing himself. Because, through God's grace, he is rich—inconceivably rich—really rich; the great ones of the world are but outwardly rich—his riches and portion make him really honorable, truly noble in the sight of God, angels and men—God has made him so rich and illustrious, 1 John 3:2—he cannot be made poor by men or Satan—his riches are durable, Prov. 8:21.

VI. A rich portion secures a man from the fear of want, and gives him many good things to enjoy.

So a Christian with God as his portion, is supplied and upheld by his providence and grace, and raised above the fear of want. "The Lord is my Shepherd," etc. Ps. 23:1; Hab. 3:17; Lam. 3:24. Behold his portion! Divine Life to quicken him, *He is our life*—

Light to direct him — Wisdom to counsel him — Power to aid and defend him — Spiritual joy to cheer him — Heavenly bread to feed him — Glorious robes to clothe him — Excellent graces to adorn him. — The angels to guard and protect him — A saint lives upon God, in whom all fulness dwells.

VII. A man possessing the greatest portion and inheritance, highly esteems it, and will not exchange it with an inferior.

So the believer highly values his portion, he loves the Lord with his heart, Ps. 18 : 1 ; "Whom have I in heaven," etc., Ps. 73 : 25. He would not change his estate with kings, etc., who are ungodly, Ps. 84 : 10. Moses despised the glory of Pharaoh's court, Heb. 11 : 24-26. The Christian will not part with his spiritual estate for all the glories and splendors of earth. He will not be like Esau, who sold, etc.

VIII. A portion or inheritance may enable a man to do more good than those destitute of his means ; he can assist those whom he esteems, etc., and sometimes even his enemies are profited by him.

So the Christian having an interest in God, is capable of doing much good to others. Heb. 13 : 1-3. (1.) By his prayers, for "the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cries." (2.) By good counsel, Acts 11 : 23. (3.) By imparting comfort, 2 Cor. 1 : 3, 4. (4.) By caution. (5.) By holy example, and by distributing to the necessities of the saints. And the *wicked* too are profited ; saints are the Light of the world—the salt of the earth. Hence Laban was blest for Jacob's sake, Gen. 30 : 27 ; and the house of Potiphar for Joseph's sake, Gen. 39 : 3. See Isa. 1 : 9.

Lastly. How SUPERIOR is this spiritual portion to all the portions of the world, which are corruptible and unsatisfying !

But God is a portion immortal, immense, infinite, and therefore satisfying. Who can compute the value of this portion ? Ps. 84 : 11 ; Ps. 63 : 3.

Other portions are in reversion for this and that child, brother, friend, etc., and they have no benefit of it at present. But God is a present portion, a present help—a present support, present riches, present honor. "Thou art my portion in the land of the living." Ps. 142 : 5.

Earthly portions have frequently mixed with them much evil ; they are a bitter sweet ; they have many snares. See 1 Tim. 6 : 9, 10 ; James 5 : 1, etc.——But God is a pure unmixed portion ; there is nothing in him but goodness ; light, and no darkness ; joy, and no sadness ; life and no death, etc.

Earthly portions are common to men, to the vilest of men, etc. But God is a peculiar portion ; he gives himself only to his own people. They only can say, "This God is our God," etc. The wicked can never say so.

Other portions are but for a time ; they pass away. Riches make themselves wings.——But God is a never-failing portion ; not only a

portion now, but a portion hereafter; a present and yet a future portion; a portion while we live — when we die — to all eternity.

APPLICATION.

1. Behold with gratitude the wonderful condescension of God in giving himself to be the portion of his people.

2. What a contrast between the godly and the ungodly! the one are exceedingly *rich* in the midst of *poverty*, and the other miserably *poor* in the midst of *riches*, as in the case of Lazarus, and the rich man, Luke 16.

3. Hence the reason of good men in all ages despising the world; they see glory beyond it — their portion is in heaven. “For I reckon that the sufferings,” etc.

4. Let the sinner seek after this portion. He has been lost by sin. Obtain then his favor through Christ.

THE SURRENDER OF THE HEART.

“My son, give me thine heart.” — Prov. 23 : 26.

PROVERBS are short, yet weighty sentences; hence we are not always to expect any connection, either of sense or sentences, in this book. Other parts of Scripture are like a rich mine, while the precious ore runs along in one continued vein; but the “Proverbs” are like a heap of pearls detached, yet possessing equal excellence and value. — The Book of Proverbs was written in Solomon’s old age, and is chiefly addressed to young people, whom he frequently admonished not to forget God, nor to offer to him the mere refuse of life, but to consecrate to him the *heart* in the morning of their days. — The text is the claim of Divine Wisdom, speaking through Solomon, for the surrender of the heart, and happy are they who yield it! Prov. 8 : 32–36.

I. WHAT IS REQUIRED? “The Heart.”

This word sometimes refers to the *mind*, or *understanding*, Prov. 10 : 8; Hosea 7 : 11; the *memory*, Ps. 119 : 11, 36; *conscience*, 1 John 3 : 20; also the *will* and *affections*, Deut. 6 : 5. In the text it means *the soul with all its powers*.

Observe 1st. *This soul is immortal*. It is the offspring of God — formed for God and eternity — capable of inconceivable happiness or misery. — It is of immense value.

2d. *This soul is awfully depraved and practically wicked*. Jer. 17 : 9. “Out of the heart proceedeth,” etc. It is carnal — enmity against God — perpetrates evil. Hence this precious jewel has been marred by sin, etc.

3d. *It is exposed to the righteous displeasure of God*. His *curse* is upon it — the soul therefore must be miserable.

4th. The soul while in this state is *possessed by God's rivals*. Satan has taken possession of it, and cruel, dark, and miserable is his dominancy.——*Business* absorbs the use of its faculties—or it is a devotee at the *shrine of wealth*—*pleasure* fascinates it—or it adores the *creature*. Matt. 10 : 37. A lover of pleasure more than a lover of God.

☞ This is the heart, or soul, which God asks for. “Give me thine heart.” Not the body only. Not outward performances merely. “God is a Spirit,” etc., Rom. 2 : 28. Not the shell, but the kernel—not the casket, but the jewel; “give me thine heart.” Not merely thy ear, tongue, or head, money, and property, but *thine heart!*

II. THE CLAIMANT. It is God. No other has a right to have it, or to ask for it.

1st. *He is the Proprietor of the heart*. He made it, and all its powers, and none else can render it happy. It never can be happy till he repossess it.

2d. *He is thy Benefactor*. Has provided for thy wants—guarded thee from danger, and preserved thee from death.

3d. *He is thy Saviour*. He died to save it—how he suffered, etc.—what a deliverance he wrought—what blessings he purchased!

☞ Mark his earnestness to save thee. He knocks at the door of thy heart, etc. Although he is worshipped by angels—and though, as the independent God, he could dispense with thy heart, yet still he pleads, “My son, give me thine heart.”

4th. *He is thy judge*, and what wilt thou do when he shall judge thee—thy heart given to another? O my son, give *ME* thine heart, and bid the world, and Satan, and pleasure, and the creature, possess it no longer.

III. FOR WHAT PURPOSE DOES GOD REQUIRE THE HEART TO BE GIVEN?

1st. *That he may enlighten it*, Eph. 5 : 14. Give it clear and proper views of sin, as the transgression of the law—and of Christ as a Saviour.

2d. *That he may pardon all its sins, and remove all its guilt*, making it free from all condemnation.

3d. *That he may regenerate it*, and re-stamp it with his image.

4th. *That he may make it happy*—with peace—the love of Christ joy in the Holy Ghost—possess it with the hope of immortality.


5th. *That he may qualify it for usefulness in his vineyard*.

6th. *That he may eternally save it*, and place it as a bright gem in the Saviour's mediatorial crown.

IV. THE WAY IN WHICH THE HEART IS TO BE SURRENDERED.

It will be the result of *conviction*—it must be given in the exercise of *faith* in the great Mediator as the only way to the Father—*surrendered at the foot of the cross*——the surrender will be

characterized by much *humility*—*contrition*—and *sorrow*——it must be done with cheerfulness, promptitude, and thankfulness.——Give it him *wholly*.

 Surrender the heart now. While the heart is soft—while the mental powers are strong—while there are so many facilities, etc.

V. THE SURRENDER OF THE HEART IS HIGHLY IMPORTANT.

The heart is his by right, and not to comply would be rebellion and insult.

To give the heart to God, would be a manifestation of his power, and would tend to his glory.

Self-interest requires this surrender. It is to save the soul from death, etc.—to have a title to an inheritance, etc. etc.

All performances, however costly, *without the heart*, will be rejected. The best of men—the most useful, have been those who have given their hearts to God in early life, and consecrated to him the prime of their being.

THE JOY OF ANGELS OVER A REPENTANT SINNER.

“Likewise, I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth.” — LUKE 15 : 10.

From the interesting parables in this chapter, it is evident that Jesus not only came to seek and to save that which was lost, but that it was ever his delight to exhibit his salvation in the most striking and affecting manner.

The subject of the text is of vast interest; it is the joy of angels over a penitent sinner—the recovery of a lost immortal spirit from the dominion of Satan, and its reconciliation to God.—— It is a principle of human nature, that the recovery of an object in danger of being lost, affords much more intense joy than the *quiet* possession of many that are safe. This is illustrated by the *lost sheep* and *piece of silver*.—— Thus we rejoice most in our *health*, on recovery from a dangerous disease—over a child rescued from danger or disease, more than over many in health or safety; also, when property is saved from conflagration or the tempest, more than over much more that has not been so exposed to peril. This feeling Christ represents as existing in heaven, 5 : 7. “Just persons;” the word *persons* is not in the original. It means simply just ones, or those who have not sinned, as angels; and they that rejoice more over the repentance of one sinner, than they do over many who have not fallen.— Consider,

I. THE REPENTANCE OF A SINNER AS THE CAUSE OF ANGELIC JOY.

The text implies that *man is a sinner*.——A sinner is one who

has rebelled against God, by rejecting his authority, breaking his righteous law, and following the devices of an evil heart. "Sin is the transgression of the law." "All unrighteousness is sin."

Repentance, as a change of thought, feeling, and practice, necessarily implies, —


1st. *A conviction of sin*, and its ruinous effects upon the soul. This is the result of illumination by the Holy Spirit, convincing of sin, and the vanity of human attempts to procure acceptance with God.

2d. *Contrition of heart*. "That godly sorrow which worketh repentance to salvation." Self-loathing, abhorrence of sin; "I abhor myself as in dust and ashes." "Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee?" See Zech. 12 : 10.

3d. *Confession of sin*: 1 John 1 : 9. A frank, sincere, and penitential confession, as in the 51st Psalm, or like that of the publican, "God be merciful," etc.

4th. *Prayer for pardoning mercy through Jesus Christ*. The sinner feels himself lost, perishing, and unable to save himself; he therefore flies to the cross to lay hold of the hope set before him, etc.

5th. *Abandonment of sin*. He sees its evil; he has felt its deadly poison, and he prays for Divine grace that he may resist and avoid it. Job 34 : 31, 32; Isa. 55 : 7. — Victory over sin, is a feast to the soul, and redounds to the glory of God's rich grace.

 What is this Repentance but the rescue of a sinner from the thralldom of Satan, the commencement of a life of holiness, obedience, spiritual enjoyment, etc., which will be consummated in heaven. Angels, therefore, may well rejoice.

II. THE JOY WHICH THE REPENTANCE OF A SINNER PRODUCES IN THE PRESENCE OF THE ANGELS OF GOD. "Likewise," etc.

1. What is this Joy? It is not the joy that has ever been felt by any human heart; it is *the joy of angels*. — Joy is the pleasure realized at the occurrence of any event grateful to the mind—the delight that thrills through the soul at the accomplishment of any event. It is sometimes preceded by mental distress and agony, and the joy realized when the wishes of the heart are gratified, is proportioned to the mind's estimated value of that realization. Hence, the joy of a sinner when he believes in Christ, is proportioned to the painful solicitude which he felt previous to his repentance.


But this is joy on account of others. God is love; and angels are like him—solicitous for the salvation of immortal souls, and rejoice when a sinner repents. — How high will be the estimate formed by the mind of an angel of the importance and value of a sinner's repentance — and what will be their joy!

2. Angels, though glorious intelligences, are represented in Scripture as *taking a deep interest in the salvation of man*.

They occupy a higher place in the scale of creation than men; are

pure spirits, not having bodies as we have. They are *angels*, the immediate messengers of God. They are styled thrones, dominions, authorities, principalities or governments, and powers, to denote that they sit upon the throne, exercise dominion, hold authority, etc. They are called chief princes, God having appointed them the first Order of rulers in the universe. They are called sons of God, implying that they are related to God in character, favor, place, and authority. They are called morning stars, to indicate the splendor and glory with which they outshine all other intelligent creatures. They are named cherubim and seraphim, to denote that they are beings possessing vast knowledge, holiness, and burning love.

They are represented as glorifying God at *creation*, when the morning stars, etc.—at the promulgation of the law, Ps. 68 : 17, 18. They take especial interest in the scheme of redemption; when Christ was born—when in agony—when he rose—and ascended—when he shall come again the second time—at the judgment, etc. etc. “Into these things the angels desire to look,” 1 Pet. 1 : 12; see also Eph. 3 : 10.

 The text implies that angels have also particular information of the effectual application of the Gospel. When a sinner repents and believes, that change is borne away, and announced in heaven, by one of the angels who continually ascend and descend upon the Son of man. John 1 : 41. “Are they not all ministering spirits,” etc. Heb. 1 : 14. This ministration commences at conversion, and is continued through all the chequered scenes of life, till at length they convey the soul freed from the body to the paradise of God. Perhaps, when the veil of sense shall be withdrawn, it will be one of the first discoveries in the celestial state to be conversant with that angel or angels who have been delegated to minister to us.

3. This joy *is intense and universal*. It is not slight or transient; it is not partial. The text implies a deep and permanent impression—of joy, not only among a few, but through all the innumerable company of angels. Heaven is always the scene of joy; but the repentance of a sinner supposes extraordinary joy—a change from happiness to still greater happiness.——It is probable, too, that even the joy of perfected spirits—the souls of departed believers may be gladdened by the same information, and especially if it have a reference to the repentance of a survivor.——Men rejoice at trifles, a battle where thousands have bled, etc. etc.; but *vast is the cause of angelic joy*, and it is *intense and universal*.

4. This joy is realized *when a sinner repents*. Not at the end of his course, but at its commencement; not merely when he is a mature Christian, but when he is being born again, and comes into the spiritual world as a babe in Christ, when he is commencing his conflict—his race, etc. etc. It is a pleasing proof of the promptitude with which the intelligence is conveyed to heaven. See with what interest angels look down upon the penitent, weeping, confessing, feeling his unworthiness, saying, “God be merciful,” etc. etc. To angels, it is a delightful thought that another engrafting is taking place to the living vine; that another stone is preparing for the heavenly building, etc. etc.——What may such a penitent become——what may he do, etc. etc.

5. Each case of conversion *is of sufficient magnitude to produce this*

joy; "one sinner that repenteth." Numbers are not always necessary to convey the idea of value and importance — there are many subjects, in regard to which number chiefly constitutes the claim to consideration; and here the number does not decrease, but augments the interest; though there is only one, yet each one is of sufficient value. What joy on the day of Pentecost; 3000 converted, afterwards when 5000 were added to the church; great joy when a multitude of the priests and people believed. — One person's conversion may relatively be of more importance than that of another man's; hence, the conversion of Saul of Tarsus — or the conversion of a learned man, a man of great talent; or the conversion of an infidel, all are vastly important. But even the conversion of an obscure, poor, ignorant man, can fill the minds of angels with joy; these glorious intelligences carried the soul of the beggar Lazarus to Abraham's bosom, where its bliss shall never, never end.

5. *Some peculiar reasons why angels REJOICE.*

(1.) *Because of the value of an immortal soul.* The soul of a sinner is of more value than millions of worlds. Man rejoices in the accumulation of wealth, honor, sensual gratification, etc. — but all these, and all that the world contains, are evanescent; but the soul shall endure when the sun, and moon, and stars shall cease to roll in the firmament of heaven. It dies not with the body — it dies not though it be unclothed. It passes into another world, and still exists. Before it, all is eternity and immutability. It fears or it hopes, it grieves or it rejoices, it swells with ceaseless transport, or it shrinks with ceaseless horror, at the constant opening of eternity. Soon the body shall lie down in the dust, and memory shall perish from the earth — but shall memory itself die? — shall the soul that now lives, and moves, and sees, and hears, and speaks within, die? No. When years numerous as the sands on the sea-shore, the drops of the ocean, leaves of the forest, or the stars in the concave of heaven, — when all these shall have passed away, its existence will still be only beginning. — Think too of the amazing powers of the soul: it is capable of inconceivable happiness. — Angels can estimate better than men the value of an immortal soul; therefore they rejoice.

(2.) *Because in the repentance of a sinner, Christ sees of the travail of his soul.* Every such case forms a part of his reward; "he was to bring many sons to glory." Heb. 2; 9-12; Isa. 53: 10-12; 52: 13, 15. Angels have a comprehensive knowledge of his essential glory — of his amazing condescension in becoming incarnate — of his sacrifices — his agony in the garden — his sufferings and death on the cross. They know that he must be rewarded by an immensity of glory — and therefore they rejoice. See Heb. 12: 2.

(3.) *Christ is glorified by the repentance of a sinner.* He becomes an "instrument of righteousness," a "servant of God," "a laborer together with God;" he is "called out of darkness, to show forth his praises," etc. etc. This shows what Christ's grace can do. In his conversion — in his conquests — in his death, the believer glorifies Christ. — Look at him as an instrument. Who is to spread his cause, who to hasten millennial glory, but Christians? Angels therefore rejoice.

Angels have no pleasure in our fall, and our conversion must awaken

every benevolent sympathy within them; so that their rejoicing is both for the glory of God, the happiness of men, for communion restored between God and them, and between themselves and men, and for the prospect now set before them of having the children of disobedience and the heirs of wrath sanctified, and glorified, and made companions with themselves in heaven, so that they may call them brethren.

If such be the joy of angels, what must be the chagrin and malice of Satan, when One mightier than he robs him of his prey? When a sinner turns to God, another fills a mansion in heaven; another joins in the triumph of the Lamb; another sings "Glory to God;" another gains a victory over sin, and Satan, and death, and so Christ sees of the travail of his soul.

APPLICATION.

1. What an uninteresting subject is the conversion of a sinner to mankind; and even to some Christians!

2. Let the sinner sighing for salvation not despair. "There is joy," etc. Christ is ready to pardon you—the Holy Spirit to comfort you, and angels to rejoice over you.

3. If you repent not, you must perish. Demons will rejoice.

MATTHEW CALLED TO BE A DISCIPLE.

"And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him." — MATT. 9: 9.

THE Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. — No sinner is too vile—no sins too numerous—no guilt too black for its powerful efficacy. — This is proved by the conduct of Christ, in offering his mercy to such characters, and by the death of Christ, which was for the chief of sinners. How rich his grace! How impartial his love! — The context contains an account of the grace and favor of Christ to poor publicans, particularly to Matthew, verse 9–13.

I. THE CHARACTER OF MATTHEW WHEN CALLED TO FOLLOW CHRIST.


1st. *Who was Matthew?*

Matthew, surnamed Levi, was son of Alpheus, a Galilean by birth, a Jew by religion, and a publican by profession. Mark 2: 14; Luke 5: 27. He is generally supposed to have been the son of a sister or cousin of the mother of Jesus. The other evangelists call him *Levi*, his Hebrew name; but he always calls himself *Matthew*, probably his name as a publican, or collector of taxes. Some think that Christ gave him the name of Matthew when he called him to be an apostle; as Simon, he surnamed Peter. Matthew signifies the *gift of God*. Ministers are God's gifts to the Church, their talents and ministry God's gifts to them.

2d. *His employment.*

He was sitting at the receipt of custom, for he was a publican, Luke 5 : 27. He was a custom-house officer at the port of Capernaum, an exciseman, a collector of taxes levied by the Romans upon the Jews. These taxes were heavy and oppressive ; they indicated the servile subjection of the Jews to the Romans, and therefore both the taxes and the collectors of them were abhorred by the people ; and no wonder, for these taxes were sold to the highest bidder, and the collectors were generally covetous and cruel. Hence for a Jew to hold such an office was regarded as extremely degrading.

Observe, when Matthew was called, (1.) He was a sinner, and needed salvation. (2.) He was engaged in a sinful occupation, the tendency of which was to harden the heart and blunt the kinder feelings, and no doubt Matthew partook of the influence of his calling.

 How important to have a calling which can be conscientiously followed ! ——— and in which God can be glorified !

II. MATTHEW WAS CALLED TO FOLLOW CHRIST.

1st. *The Nature of his call.*

(1.) It was a *discriminating call*. “He saw a man named Matthew,” etc. It is probable that Matthew had a previous knowledge of the miracles and doctrines of Christ, whom he might have heard preach. ——— He might have been dissatisfied with his own occupation — have felt the burden of his sins, etc., etc. All this appears probable considering the promptitude with which he followed Christ. The eye of Christ saw all this — and that he had natural talents for preaching and writing his Gospel for the good of successive generations.

(2.) It was an *enlightening call*. When he said, “Follow me,” a flood of light was poured into his mind. He immediately saw that it was high time to abandon his sins — to give up his degrading employment, and to submit to Christ. ——— The Spirit operated.

(3.) It was an *efficacious call*. He spake as one having authority, etc. — That call subdued his will — and subjugated his heart ——— for “he arose and followed him.”

(4.) It was a *gracious and merciful call*. ——— To call a sinner — a vile publican, designing to pardon him, justify him — adopt him, and finally crown him ! O amazing grace to man !

(5.) It was a *prospective call*. That is to say, Christ intended to make him an apostle, an evangelist.*

2d. *The conduct of Matthew* ; he followed Christ, that is, he became *his disciple*. ——— To follow Christ implies,

(1.) *A knowledge of him and his truth*. Some of Matthew’s relatives were followers of Christ, and therefore he must have had some knowledge of him. As he sat in the custom-house his mind would frequently revert to Christ, of whom his friends had told him. ——— The

* The most general opinion of both ancients and moderns is, that he preached and suffered martyrdom in Persia, or among the Parthians, or in Caramania, which then was subject to the Parthians. ——— CALMET.

design of preaching is to give the knowledge of Christ. — No man can really follow the Redeemer without some understanding of him.

(2.) *It implies dissatisfaction with a life of sin*, and a conviction of the superior excellence of a holy life;—the result of the Spirit's operations.

(3.) *Decision for Christ*. The resolve of the heart to love him and follow him. "Lord, I am thine."

(4.) *Renunciation of everything that stands in competition with Christ*. Matthew surrendered a lucrative employment, a good business, etc., etc. Luke mentions a circumstance omitted by Matthew himself, and indicative of great humility and sacrifice of self-interest:—"he left all." Luke 5: 27, 28. The sinner must surrender his darling sins—his pleasures—self-interest—the world—the creature, however dear, if competitors with Christ. Matt. 16: 24; Mark 8: 34.

(5.) *Dependence upon his Sacrifice* for acceptance—and for all needful blessings.

(6.) *Prompt obedience to all his commandments*. So did Matthew. So must the repentant sinner. Matthew conferred not with flesh and blood, etc., etc.

III. THE ADVANTAGES RESULTING FROM FOLLOWING CHRIST.

1st. *The enjoyment of all spiritual blessings*. As pardon, peace, holiness, etc.

2d. *Rest of mind*. The transgressor has no rest. The man whose occupation, or connections, and practices are sinful, must have a restless mind. When these are abandoned for Christ, there is peace.

3d. *Honorable employment in doing good*. So Matthew. A true Christian delights in *well-doing*.

4th. *Acknowledgment by the Redeemer at the day of judgment*.

CONCLUSION.

Christ is passing by in preaching—in providence—in the operations of his Spirit. Ye young, ye old, he calls you to follow him. Arise, forsake the world, and sin, and follow him now.

MUTUAL COMFORT.

"Wherefore comfort one another with these words."—1 THESS. 4: 18.

THE scenes and transactions of a future day of judgment, as detailed in the Scriptures, are calculated to fill the mind of the sinner with awe. To him it is "a fearful looking for of judgment."—But the people of God recognize it as the day of their "manifestation;" when Christ who was once offered to bear the sins of many shall appear the second without sin (a sin-offering) unto salvation. It will be the day of

deliverance from all evil — the day of their exaltation — the day of their coronation — the day when they will have done with this material world, and all its vexatious affairs, and enter that paradise of immortality which Christ has prepared for his people. — A prospect like this cheers them in all the conflicts of life.

Probably some of the Christians at Thessalonica mourned for their relatives or friends who had died in the Lord. The design of the Apostle in the context is to dissuade them from inordinate sorrow on that account, and to inspire them with the hope of seeing those friends again under very different, yet infinitely more favorable circumstances. Read verses 13, 14. — Sometimes inordinate grief for the dead makes a man more like a heathen *without hope*, than a Christian who has a *good hope*.

I. THAT CHRISTIANS ARE FREQUENTLY PLACED IN CIRCUMSTANCES CAUSING THEM TO REQUIRE DIVINE COMFORT.

How frequently is this the case! "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards." If he has not trouble now, he may very soon have, for who can tell what a day may bring forth? What reverses in states and circumstances do we frequently see. The rose of health departs from the cheek—strength from the limbs, and vivacity from the mind. The man of wealth is seen sitting on his shipwrecked substance, and the happy family is rendered desolate by the ravages of mortality. All is transitory here; "the fashion of this world passes away." Nothing is certain but *the Truth*—the truth contained in the text and context, by which we learn that though believers must mourn, and change, and wither, and die, yet they shall bloom again, and be filled with infinite joy in the morning of the resurrection.

Believers need comfort: 1st. *In the season of spiritual conflict.*

"The flesh lusteth against the Spirit," etc. Gal. 5: 17. While we are in the body this struggle will go on. The very attempts of sin to frustrate the spiritual designs of the soul, and to supplant the work of grace, are very distressing. In this respect, every heart knows its own bitterness——The believer is often in heaviness and darkness through manifold temptations.——He therefore needs comfort.——He needs to be pointed to that period when the body and soul shall be made to harmonize.

2d. *In times of persecution.*

"In the world ye shall have tribulation," etc. See Gal. 4: 29. The Apostles and primitive Christians were exposed to many violent persecutions, and even to death itself. Rom. 8: 36; 2 Cor. 4: 8-14. Subsequent ages too have had thousands of martyrs. Amid the fire of persecution they were comforted by the sublime truths to which the Apostle refers when he says, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." They had respect to the recompense of reward. Heb. 11: 21-26. They looked forward to a glorious resurrection—to the day of judgment, when God will vindicate their cause, punish their enemies, and give to his conquering servants the crown of immortality. 2 Tim. 1: 8, 11, 12; 2: 11, 12. ———

Though the fire of persecution has, in a great measure, been quenched, yet Christians now are sometimes assailed—are ridiculed, and represented as deceived—as enthusiasts—as fanatics, etc. They therefore need comfort; and especially so, if weak in knowledge and Christian experience. “Wherefore comfort one another.”

3d. *In the season of affliction.*

“Whom the father loveth he chasteneth,” etc. Sometimes the Christian is tried by ungodly children and relatives—sometimes by reverses in his circumstances——and sometimes by bodily afflictions; these afflictions may be severe, long, and connected with great poverty as their result. Amid this darkness and distress, what would the Christian do without Divine support? He needs the *comfort* arising from “these words.”

4th. *Under bereavements.*

Death destroys the dearest ties of nature. He is no respecter of persons. The rich and the poor—the honorable and the ignoble—the young and the old—the beautiful and the ordinary, must be torn from the embraces of affection. How painful to deposit in the grave, as the food of worms, a husband, or wife, or child, or parent! etc. etc.——Then the mind is frequently overwhelmed. “A voice is heard in Ramah, Rachael weeping for her children,” etc.——Who can bind up the heart then? who can stop those tears? Nothing but “*these words.*”

5th. Not merely under bereavements, but also *in prospect of our own death.*

It is a solemn thing to die—to pass into eternity.——Some have a constitutional feebleness of spirit, and such an overwhelming sense of their imperfections that the aspect of death, pale and ghastly, and his awful voice, Prepare to meet thy God, strike terror into their hearts.——What is to comfort then? Not self-righteousness—not wealth—not human expedients—not philosophy. Nothing but “*these words.*”

Let reason vainly boast her power
To teach her children how to die,
The sinner in a dying hour,
Needs more than reason can supply.
A view of Christ, the sinner's Friend,
Alone can cheer him in the end.

II. THAT THE LANGUAGE OF THE APOSTLE IN THE CONTEXT IS CALCULATED TO YIELD COMFORT.—Verse 13–18.

1st. It is declared that all true Christians have a *hope of a glorious resurrection; and of a glorious reception by Christ at the judgment day*, v. 13. This hope is founded on faith, v. 14; Heb. 11: 1; 1 Pet. 1: 3, 4. The doctrine of the resurrection is taught throughout the Scriptures, especially in 1 Cor. 15; see also Phil. 3: 20, 21, and other passages.

Christians have this hope while they live, and when they die. How cheering under the afore-mentioned trials of life!

In *spiritual conflicts* “these words” imply that every vestige of sin

will be destroyed, that the body will be spiritual, and united to a holy soul, forming one glorious immaculate man for eternity. — In *affliction*, that the body will sicken and die no more—it will oppress the soul no more. — In *persecution*, that these future transactions will forever separate him from the wicked, who will then cease from troubling him—and the weary will forever be at rest. — Under *bereavements*, that he shall see his friends and relatives again, who are not lost, but gone before.

Therefore it is improper for us under bereavements to act like the unregenerate of mankind, *who have no hope*, v. 13. Christians have a sure hope of eternal life, “which God, who cannot lie, hath promised.” This hope is sufficient to counterbalance all our griefs and sorrows on account of departed friends. We shall see them again, if we really “believe that Jesus died and rose again.” — Observe,

(1.) The Apostle says, *they sleep in Jesus*, v. 14. They are *asleep*, v. 13. They are *fallen asleep in Christ*, 1 Cor. 15: 18. Death does not annihilate them. Sleep never implies this. Death is but a sleep to them. It is their undisturbed rest, till Christ shall come to *awaken* them. For a season they have retired from this troublesome world, and *sleep in Jesus*, in his arms, on his bosom, under his special care and protection. Their souls are with him in Paradise, and their dust waits in the grave for the manifestation of his mighty power.

(2.) They shall be *raised from the dead*, for “*God will bring them with him*.” They who sleep in Jesus, shall be raised up as Christ was raised from the dead, by his own eternal power and energy, 1 Cor. 15: 18, 20. His resurrection is a full confirmation of all that is said in the Gospel, which has brought life and immortality to light. Then the saints will bid adieu to all sin, corruption, and death. — Then they will bear the image of the heavenly, and commence their immortal life.

(3.) He further intimates that the last generation *should not die at all*, but be, in a moment, changed to immortals, verse 15. “*We which are alive*,” etc. The Apostle meant the Church in general found alive at the last day, and he did not expect the coming of Christ in his time, for in another place he speaks of his own death; “*Absent from the body*,” etc. — The change of those found alive is so mysterious that we cannot comprehend it, 1 Cor. 15: 51. But as flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, the *mortal* part must, in a moment, etc., put on immortality.

(4.) Though the living shall not die, but be transformed, yet *the dead should first be raised*, and made glorious and immortal, and so in some measure have the preference and advantage. — “*Shall not prevent them which are asleep*,” verse 15.

2d. It is declared the righteous shall finally *triumph amid scenes of unparalleled grandeur*,* verse 16, 17.

* There are magnificent scenes before us. There is no description anywhere which is more sublime than that in the close of this chapter. Great events are brought together here, any one of which is more grand than all the pomp of courts, and all the sublimity of battle, and all the grandeur of a triumphal civic procession. The glory of the descending Judge of all mankind; the attending retinue of angels, and of the spirits of the dead: the loud shout of the descending host; the clangor of the archangel's trumpet; the bursting of graves and the coming forth of the

Observe the order of this awfully glorious day :

(1.) *Christ* in all the dignity and splendor of his eternal majesty *shall descend from heaven* to the mid-region, what the apostle calls *the air*, somewhere within the earth's atmosphere. — What a spectacle! how glorious his appearance, and how different from his first coming, when "his visage was so marred more than any man's, and his form more than the sons of men!" Isa. 52: 14.

The Lord shall come! but not the same
As once in lowliness He came;
A silent Lamb before his foes,
A weary man, and full of woes.

The Lord shall come! a dreadful form,
With rainbow wreath and robes of storm,
On cherub-wings, and wings of wind!
Appointed Judge of all mankind.

Can this be He, who wont to stray
As pilgrim on the world's highway,
Oppressed by power, and mocked by pride,
The Nazarene — the crucified?

While sinners in despair shall call,
"Rocks, hide us; mountains, on us fall!"
The saints, ascending from the tomb,
Shall joyful sing, "The Lord is come!"

(2.) Then the *shout*, or notice shall be given of the approach of Christ and his angels — the *angelic* shout — the shout of perfected spirits, coming to possess their glorified bodies — a shout of rapture, on account of the honor that shall be done to Christ, and the felicity that shall be given to the saints.

(3.) Then shall be heard *the voice of the Archangel appointed* by Christ to utter the command, "Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment!" John 5: 28, 29. This chief angel will be the servant and General of those Hosts of the Lord.

(4.) When all the dead are raised, then *the trumpet shall sound*, as the signal for angels, and devils, and men, to congregate before the throne of Christ. It was by the sound of the trumpet that the solemn assemblies under the law were convoked, to which there is here an allusion. But this trumpet shall sound louder than that of Sinai. Heb. 12: 19.

(5.) Then follows *the judgment*, and also *the triumph of the righteous*. The dead bodies of the saints are raised — those who are alive are changed and made immortal — they *are caught up together to meet the Lord in the air* — the books are opened — the judgment proceeds — the righteous are acquitted, and welcomed to the kingdom prepared for them — while the wicked are condemned. See Matt. 25: 31.

(6.) The triumph of the righteous will be *eternal*. "And so shall we ever be with the Lord," verse 17. They shall forever rest — for-

millions there entombed; the rapid, sudden, glorious change on the millions of living men; the consternation of the wicked; the ascent of the innumerable host to the regions of the air; and the solemn process of the judgment there — what has ever occurred like these events in this world? And how strange it is that the thoughts of men are not turned away from the trifles — the show — the shadow — the glitter — the empty pageantry here — to these bright and glorious realities! — BARNES.

ever enjoy—forever increase in knowledge and love. They shall be with *the Lord*—see him as he is, and be like him. 1 John 3:2.

III. THAT THIS COMFORT SHOULD BE MUTUALLY ADMINISTERED. “Wherefore comfort,” etc.

1st. It is a duty *sadly neglected*.

2d. To comfort one another it is necessary to have *an intimate knowledge of “these words,”* or truths. Therefore study them. They will yield a rich feast—and you can then richly feast others.

3d. Be ready to impart this comfort when needed. Visit the afflicted—the tempted—the bereaved—the dying. To them relate these glorious truths.

4th. Learn the necessity of Christian intercourse; “Comfort one another.” Mal. 3:16.

SOLICITUDE TO ENJOY CHRIST.

“That I may win Christ.”—PHIL. 3:8.

THERE are times in the life of every believer when death, and judgment, and eternity, are presented to the mind's eye in all their solemn importance.——At those seasons, the things of earth appear in their proper character, as vain and finite, and incapable of satisfying a regenerate soul.——Then especially Christ is seen to be an invaluable prize.——So it was with Paul. He counted all things but loss for, etc. etc. He parted with all in order to win “the pearl of great price,” which alone could make him rich, honorable, and happy forever; verse 7, 8.

I. THE OBJECT OF CHRISTIAN SOLICITUDE.

The Apostle speaks of this object as a prize. The prize is “Christ.” The anointed Saviour; the Divine Redeemer; the Surety for man; the Fountain of all spiritual blessings; the “Pearl of great Price.”

1st. *This Prize has been graciously given to man.* “God so loved,” etc. John 3:16. Called “the unspeakable Gift,” 2 Cor. 9:15; Rom. 8:32.

2d. *The sinner's spiritual wretchedness required such a gift, or prize.* Fallen, dark, condemned, under the curse, and exposed to death. Rom. 5:6–8.

3d. *This Prize is exactly adapted to man's wants.* He gives pardon to the guilty, liberty to the captive, life to the condemned, health to the sick, light to the blind, food to the hungry, the robe of righteousness to the naked soul, rest to the weary, strength to the weak, and riches to the poor.

4th. *No person, nor any human system, can become a substitute*

for this prize. "Neither is there salvation in any other." "For other foundation," etc.

5th. Therefore, he is a *rich and invaluable Prize*. Who can estimate the value? Neither men, nor angels.——He who wins, wins the most valuable jewel in the universe; he becomes richer than the most wealthy, and more honorable than the most noble in the world.

His *value and preciousness* are applicable at all times, and in every state. In all trouble, trials, etc., then he is a friend indeed. He dignifies the young—is the glory of manhood—and the staff of old age.

6th. *This Prize is immortal*. Other prizes, possessions, estates, wither and decay, or we must leave them; but this shall endure forever.

II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN WINNING THE PRIZE?

To *win* is to obtain possession of anything, 2 Chron. 32 : 1. To win Christ is to get possession of him as an everlasting portion.

1st. *Negatively, this Prize cannot be won,*

(1.) *By self-righteousness.* Rom. 3 : 20–24, etc.

(2.) *Nor by ceremonial observances.* Baptism does not save; nor a profession or form of religious duty. This prize is a *gift*.

(3.) *Nor by bodily austerities.* God afflicts the soul. It is his province only, and different from the prescription of fanatical priests. Isa. 58 : 5; Joel 2 : 13.

2d. *Positively.*

(1.) Those who win are *enlightened by the Spirit* to see the richness, glory, and suitability of this Prize, and brought to feel their need of it. Rev. 3 : 17, 18.

(2.) *The creation in the soul of earnest desires* to win or possess it. Ps. 73 : 25; Heb. 11 : 16; Phil. 1 : 23.

(3.) *Compliance with the requisitions of the Gospel.*

As *self-abhorrence* for guilt, vileness, etc.——As *self-denial*, parting with *all*, like the Apostle Paul, as stated in the context; so the penitent sells all to buy this treasure. See Matt. 13 : 44–46.

——As *faith* in the Sacrifice of Christ, through which we begin to win or possess his grace, promises, friendship, love, etc. etc.

——As *the performance of Christian duties*. Not that these merit the Prize, but prove that we have it, and love him for it—hence we fight the good fight of faith—run the race set before us—"pressing towards the mark for the prize," etc.

APPLICATION.

1st. How different the pursuit of the righteous from that of the wicked!

2d. Let believers continue in the good old way, and, in dependence upon divine grace, so run as to obtain.

3d. Let the penitent—the Christless—the Prizeless, be induced to win while it is an accepted time, and the day of salvation.

LIFE FOUND BY SEEKING THE LORD.

"For thus saith the Lord to the House of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live."—
AMOS 5 : 4.

NOTHING is so important to man as an interest in the Divine favor. ——— Nothing ought so much to command the energy of the mind to secure it. ——— But man, while carnal, delights more in phantoms than in that which is real and substantial. ——— Among all the race of mortals, how few are heard inquiring, Where is God, my Maker? The great majority are asking, Where is mirth?—wealth?—profit?—or preferment?—to be had? ——— The transgressors among the children of Israel are called to seek him that they might live, verse 1-3.

I. THE DUTY OF SEEKING THE LORD.

This expression is often used as a description of true religion. The Godly are said to be a generation that seek the face of the God of Jacob, and such are encouraged to rejoice. Psalm 24 : 6 ; 105 : 3. It is the first duty also the convinced sinner must perform, and happy is he who performs it early. To seek the Lord implies,

1st. *That he is offended* ; that there is a state of moral distance between him and us, as between two persons who have disagreed. Hence God is said to be angry with the wicked every day ; both them and their ways doth his soul hate, and he hath shown his displeasure in threatenings and in judgments. Rom. 3 : 10. While man was holy he had communion with him ; but now the Lord has left the earth as a desolate habitation.

2d. That man is *under condemnation*, and *exposed to the curse of the law* ; he is in a ruined condition, and while in that state, can have no communion with God. Rom. 3 : 19, 20 ; Gal. 3 : 10.

3d. That his state is a *helpless one*. By the light of nature ; by any expedient devised by human philosophy ; by any of his own mental inventions, or by any of his attempts at goodness, he cannot regain the favor of the Almighty ; for he is without strength, and ignorant. Isa. 1 : 2, 3. He is also dead in trespasses and sins. Eph. 2 : 1.

4th. Seeking the Lord implies that *a way of reconciliation is opened by the blood of the cross*. Rom. 3 : 23-26 ; 2 Cor. 5 : 19, 20. "God so loved the world," etc. A way is now opened, and God, through Christ, may be found. John 10 : 9 ; 6 : 37.

5th. Seeking the Lord implies *the exercise of repentance and faith*. "Repentance towards God," etc. This is the foundation of all true religion ; there is no seeking the Lord but in this way ; if we seek in any other way we shall never find. "Except ye repent," etc. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." By *repentance* sin is abhorred and forsaken—by *faith* sin is pardoned, and guilt removed.—"The blood of Jesus Christ his Son," etc.

6th. This duty also implies *earnestness*. As a man who has lost

a valuable jewel, etc. etc. See the parable of the lost sheep—the ten pieces of silver. Luke 15. You have lost God! What earthly loss can be compared to that?—The regaining of God's friendship should engage all the powers of the soul. 1 Chron. 22 : 19.

II. THE PROMISE CONNECTED WITH SEEKING THE LORD: "Ye shall live."

By so acting, the Israelites would avoid threatened judgments. Hence the exhortations and promises are repeated in some of the following verses, 6, 8, 14. So in reference to the seeking sinner, the promise implies, they shall find God, shall be reconciled to him, and enjoy all those blessings which the Gospel has promised to the believing soul. "Ye shall live."

1st. *The sentence of condemnation shall be repealed, the curse shall be removed.* Your numerous sins shall be pardoned—and all your guilt discharged. Acts 13 : 38, 39; Isa. 12 : 1, etc.; Rom. 8 : 33, 34. "Freely justified by his grace."——What a blessing! Treated as innocent, as though you had never sinned, by Jehovah, saints, angels, etc.

2d. *Ye shall live a life of purity.* Shall be regenerated, and have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

3d. *Shall live in my family.* 1 John 3 : 1; John 1 : 12. You shall enjoy their privileges, and share in their joys—engage in their duties, and be under my protection.

4th. *Ye shall live in communion with me.* John 14 : 23; 1 John 1 : 3. What a delightful privilege is this! How cheering in trouble, in conflict, and in solitude! "I am not alone, for the Father is with me, and sweet are his visits to me."

5th. *You shall live under the influence of a good hope through grace*—the expectancy of future endless life.

6th. *Ye shall live with me forever*; "shall never perish;" "have everlasting life." Rom. 6 : 23, and other passages.

APPLICATION.

1st. Be thankful for Christ through whom God may be found.

2d. Seek him now. Time is short. Life is uncertain. Sin is hardening. The world is alluring. Your present impressions and convictions may be evanescent.

SAINTS COMPARED TO GOLD.

A METAPHORICAL SKETCH.

"When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."—JOB 23 : 10. — See also LAM. 4 : 2; ZECH. 13 : 9; 1 PET. 1 : 7.

HAPPY are they who can say, "The Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are the sons of God"! They are the favorites of Jeho-

vah, and the objects of his constant love. The world may despise them and treat them with scorn and cruelty, yet God calls them his elect, his chosen, a holy nation, a peculiar people, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. See Lam. 4 : 2.

I. Gold is generally found buried in the earth, mixed with sand, or other material, and therefore requires to be dug out and separated from those materials.

So the saints have been taken out from the beggarly elements of this world—they have been hewn from Nature's quarry, by the hammer of God's word, and made separate from sinners. Eph. 2 : 1, etc. They are now God's people, and distinct from the children of the world, the heirs of wrath. They are *new creatures* in Christ Jesus.

II. Gold, though regarded as a pure metal, has yet some dross in it. At the same time, naturalists observe, there is not any metal more free from dross and rust than gold.

The saints, though holy and precious to God, are not without sin; there is some dross of corruption in the best of them. There is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good and sinneth not, Eccl. 7 : 20; 1 John 1 : 8.

III. Gold is refined in the fire, by which it is rendered still more pure, solid, and strong.

The saints are also put into the fire, or furnace of affliction, to purge and to refine them from their dross of corruption. See Zech. 13 : 9; 1 Pet. 4 : 12, 13; 1 Pet. 1 : 7. Bodily afflictions, bereavements, reverses of circumstances, through which saints pass, are regarded by him as the refining process appointed by their heavenly Father to free them from any injurious alloy. "Thy silver is become dross; I will purge away all thy dross, and take away all thy tin." Isa. 1 : 22, 25. The dross or tin may represent their earthly-mindedness, unholy tempers, etc. etc.

IV. Gold is a precious metal. It is esteemed the most valuable on earth. Hence things of very great value are in the Scriptures represented by gold.

The saints are a choice and precious people, the excellent ones in all the earth. Ps. 16 : 3; Prov. 12 : 26. God esteems them as his portion, Deut. 32 : 9; they are called *precious sons of Zion*, comparable to fine gold. They are called *honorable*, Isa. 43 : 4. They are called *jewels*, Mal. 3 : 17.

V. Gold is very pliant; you may bend and work it as you please, and the fire makes it more pliable and yielding, etc.

So the saints are of a soft and pliable nature. God having infused his precious grace into their hearts, they are of a yielding temper; they have hearts of flesh; and God, by putting them into the fire, makes them more pliant and flexible; they soon yield to the will of God, when others will not. — They are resigned and teachable, while others rebel and repine.

VI. Gold will endure the fire; though it be frequently put into the Furnace, yet it loses nothing but the drossy part. The fire purifies it, and cannot destroy its precious nature. However fierce and raging the flames, gold retains its excellency.

So the people of God endure the fiery trial; they are not burned up, or consumed in the Furnace of affliction though heated seven-fold. God stands by the Furnace, and gives them strength according to their trial. Though their trials pain them, reduce their physical strength and energy, yet God is with them, and his people, the gold, are not hurt. They come out, like gold seven times purified. Sincere Christians are compared to gold, and hypocrites to wood, hay, and stubble, which the fire will burn up. 1 Cor. 3: 12, 13; Mal. 4: 1.

VII. Gold is often formed into vessels ingeniously wrought, for the pleasure, honor, and use of princes and great men.

So God forms some of his people for most excellent service; he makes them vessels of honor to hold the glorious treasure of the Gospel, to communicate it to others, 2 Cor. 4: 7. They have the ministry of reconciliation committed to them—and are stewards of the mysteries of the Gospel. See 2 Tim. 2: 20, 21. They may be accounted as earthen pitchers, yet they are as fine gold. Lam. 4: 2.

VIII. Gold is carefully preserved; men highly value it, and sometimes hide it, lest men should steal it.

So God highly values his people, and keeps and preserves them day and night. They are called his Hidden Oves; they shelter under his wings, they hide in his Pavilion and are safe. Their life is hid with Christ in God. Col. 3: 3, 4.

IX. Men endure much fatigue, sustain great losses, sacrifices, etc., to obtain gold, and make it sure to themselves.

So Jesus Christ endured great pain and loss for his people; he laid down his life for them. See 1 Pet. 1: 18, 19.

X. Gold is useful. It is that by which we purchase what is essential for life, etc., etc.

So Christians are useful. In their families, neighborhood, to the world at large. They seek the salvation of sinners, and the glory of God. The purposes of God in reference to the diffusion of his glory in the world, will not be effected without them.

☞ Such is the *parallel* of the Metaphor; now observe its *disparity*.

I. Gold is earthly and perishable, and by constant use it weareth away.

But the saints, though their bodies are earthly and die, yet they shall be raised to endless life; and their souls are immortal. The more service they do, the more glorious they shall be. Saints are not the worse for wearing. They shall never perish, John 10: 28.

II. Gold receives its beauty and glory from art. Were it not

moulded, fashioned, and burnished by the ingenuity of man, it would not be so highly esteemed.

But the saints have all their glory from grace; it is not the work of men's hands, but the work of God's hands. This gives them their beauty, and splendor, and happiness.

III. Gold is gold naturally; though made purer by the subsequent process.

But the saints, prior to their regeneration, were earthly, sensual, etc., and not gold naturally. It is grace that makes them excellent as gold; it is grace that makes them differ from others.

APPLICATION.

- 1st. See the power of Divine grace in making men like gold.
- 2d. Be thankful for that grace, and pray for more, that you may shine more and more.
- 3d. How awful to be regarded as dross!

THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY UNDER TRIALS.

"Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator."—1 PEr. 4:19.

TRIBULATION must be the lot of the human family.——This is the result of sin, which has rendered the heart depraved, and the body mortal. All trials may be traced to this fruitful source.——Christians, though the chosen of God, are not exempt. But they have this privilege: while the wicked in their distress have no refuge—no consolation, higher than this earth, they, the saints, have a Counsellor and Friend in Heaven, who has promised to help and guide them safely to the end.——How wise to commit their cause into his hands! Hence the text.——Observe,

I. THAT CHRISTIANS MUST EXPECT TO SUFFER. "Wherefore let them that suffer," etc. They suffer,

1st. Sometimes by *Adversity*. Poverty. Christ so suffered; so did his apostles.——Bodily affliction, etc.

2d. *In their reputation*. Christ was despised, etc., called Beelzebub, etc. See verse 14. The wicked cannot bear the light—holiness, zeal for God, "well-doing," are detested by the carnal mind; and if they can do no more, they will traduce the character of the righteous. Matt. 11:18; Luke 7:33; Heb. 11:25, 26.

3d. *In their property*. Heb. 10:34. In primitive times, and the time of Catholic and Episcopalian persecution, conscientious Christians were plundered of their substance.——Though this has ceased to a great extent, yet a Christian cannot, by reason of his profession, mingle

with the wicked; and non-association may injure his worldly interests. Eminent piety will be a bar to promotion.

4th. *In their liberty and life.* Though extreme suffering has passed away, the recollection may serve to make us thankful — and to endear the memory of those men who counted not their lives dear unto them. — Ecclesiastical domination in some measure still exists, and is visible in the exaction of money for upholding the church of the aristocracy, which the truly enlightened cannot conscientiously pay. —

II. THAT CHRISTIANS SUFFER ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF GOD.
“Let them that suffer according to the will of God,” etc.

God has been pleased to permit it. “He doeth what he pleaseth among the armies of heaven,” etc.

1st. It is the will of God *that his cause be carried on*, and to carry it on there must be soldiers, conflict and battle with all spiritual foes. — And even by ordinary trials it is the will of God that Christians should suffer. — Toil, poverty, affliction, and death are the result of sin, and must be endured.

2d. These sufferings are for *the trial of faith*, see verses 12, 13; 1 Pet. 1: 7. It is the day of battle that tests the love and valor of a soldier; and it is the hour of spiritual conflict that shows the amount of faith. Then the believer feels himself helpless in a conflict so mighty, and confides in God alone; so it was with Paul: — “None of these things move me,” etc. “I count all things but loss,” etc. So it was with the Church at Thessalonica; see 1 Thess. 1: 3, 6.

3d. These sufferings *promote spiritual prosperity and happiness*. The graces of the Spirit generally languish under worldly prosperity. Matt. 13: 22. But under trials God gives “more grace,” and then these graces manifest their beauty and strength. 2 Cor. 12: 9, 10. — The Christian comes out of the conflict refined, sublimated, and conformed to God. The furnace, though fiery and painful, has matured his graces, and made him a veteran. Rom. 5: 3-5. Even Christ himself was “made perfect through sufferings,” etc.

4th. They *promote the glory of God*. They show what his grace can do in supporting the mind of the sufferer, and in filling their hearts with gratitude to God. Their piety is greatly advanced, and they become more efficient servants of the cross; therefore God must be glorified. — Oh, what triumphant praise will resound from the myriads of the redeemed, when all the wonders of his love shall be universally and completely known! When God comes forth from his pavilion of light, and explains to his people all the now complex procedure of his providence and grace, the saints will exclaim, “Thou hast done all things well.”

III. THE CONDUCT OF CHRISTIANS UNDER SUFFERINGS.

1st. They should be characterized by *well-doing*. “Well-doing” refers to a state of holy obedience — the result of faith, and the evidence of love to God. — “Well-doing” also implies patience and submission under trials, in opposition to resistance, fretfulness, etc., under the will of God, or resentment against those who may persecute. Well-

doing is following Christ, who "when he was reviled," etc. The more we are persecuted the stronger must be our attachment to Christ. Job 5: 19, 22.

2d. In every situation, *the soul is more to be valued* than the body. It is the Jewel, and its security must be promoted; and who can keep that Jewel but God.

3d. *Enlarged views of the love and care of Almighty God*, especially as "a faithful Creator" of all the souls of his people committed to his care in the time of peril or death.

4th. The actual surrender of the soul to "*his keeping*." Delightful act! a glorious privilege and sure defence! If God keep it, who can destroy it?

APPLICATION.

1st. See the dignity, wealth, and happiness of God's people. He loves and protects them, and is their portion. Ps. 44: 15.

2d. Learn the folly of trusting in human resources amid the sufferings of life.

3d. Also the madness of those who persecute the Church of Christ. Isa. 54: 17.

DOUBTFUL CHRISTIANS.

"I stand in doubt of you."—GAL. 4: 20.

Pious and faithful ministers wish to promote the spiritual interest of their people. Paul, well knowing the state of the church at Galatia, expresses the most painful apprehensions on their account, verses 19, 20.——Their attachment to Christianity was abating, through the influence of false teachers.——In forming an opinion of our brethren, it requires the exercise of that charity which "suffereth long," etc.——But charity, with all its kindness, cannot tolerate sin; "it rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth."

I. NOTICE THOSE PERSONS WHOSE RELIGION IS LIABLE TO SUSPICION.

I stand in doubt of you.

1st. Who have *long attended the means of grace*, and yet *are very defective in knowledge*. May it not be said of some of you; Heb. 5: 12. Some may have heard the gospel for years, and yet cannot give a distinct and satisfactory answer to some of the most important and plainest questions on the doctrines of the Gospel.

2d. Who possess much knowledge, *but are puffed up with it*. Sometimes where there is much knowledge there is little grace.——Divine knowledge is more valuable than rubies, but its utility is neutralized by pride, which is like the fly in the apothecary's ointment.——Such pride of knowledge is put to shame by the declaration of

an ancient philosopher: "That after all he knew, he only knew this, that he knew nothing."—— Knowledge must be accompanied with grace in the heart, otherwise it will only serve as a lamp to illumine the broad way leading to destruction. Persons having knowledge without grace, resemble the fallen angels, who have extensive intelligence, but no grace.

8d. Who contend for doctrinal religion, rather than for that which is practical and experimental. We are not to be indifferent about the principles of Christianity.—— But where persons are extremely nice about minor points, and neglect the religion of the heart, etc., they are like the Pharisees who were punctilious enough in tithing mint, anise, and cummin, while they neglected the weightier matters of the law, judgment, faith, and the love of God. Eternal life depends not on disputation, etc., but on being born again, etc.


8d. Who waver in their attachment to the fundamental principles of the Gospel. The Christians at Galatia were wavering, in consequence of the influence of Judaizing teachers, who wished to turn their minds from Christianity to Judaism.—— The faith once delivered to the saints is to be earnestly contended for, and not easily surrendered.—— Many run well for a time, but are afterwards hindered, and like the Galatians, ch. 3 : 3. Paul was afraid lest the Corinthians, through the subtlety of Satan, should be tempted to do the same, 1 Cor. 11 : 2, 3. Professors are in danger of being tossed to and fro, etc., Eph. 4 : 14.—— How firm was the attachment of Paul! "I am determined," etc. "God forbid," etc.

5th. Who neglect the ordinances of God's House. A real Christian can say with David, "One thing have I desired of the Lord," etc. Ps. 27 : 4 ; 84 : 10.—— Some professors are very remiss in attending the means of grace—— attending only when inclination or convenience may serve. One Sabbath they expect visitors, another they have some domestic arrangement to make, and another they are hindered by the weather. Some plead distance as an excuse for their absence, others the want of suitable apparel ; and some who do attend, come late, and are weary long before the service is over. Some yield to almost imperceptible sickness, which would not be allowed to hinder from pursuing their worldly avocations.—— Thus the ways of Zion do mourn. Lam. 1 : 4. This gives cause for suspicion ; "I stand in doubt of you."—— Some attend public worship, but not the more private means of grace.—— Your souls are not in health, and cannot prosper.

6th. Who neglect Devotional exercises. Not only in the House of God, but in the family, closet, etc. Religious declension generally begins at the closet. Neglecting meditation, self-examination, reading the Scriptures and private prayer, or performing them in a superficial manner, and with great reluctance, is sufficient to create suspicion. The resolution of the Psalmist was a noble one. Ps. 141 : 2. I stand in doubt of you who have families, but no family worship. Though you are daily, hourly, and every moment receiving blessings from heaven, yet you have no family altar, on which to offer the morning and evening sacrifice of a grateful heart. You are unlike Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who, wherever they went, raised an altar to the Lord. You are unlike Joshua, who said, "As for me," etc. You are unlike Daniel, who neither allowed the affairs of state, nor the threaten-

ings of the den of lions to prevent him praying to God. — Such remissness testifies to your children, servants, etc., the doubtful nature of your religious profession.

7th. Who *co-operate not with the Church* to advance the kingdom of Christ in the world. True believers are the servants of Christ, and laborers together with God; and they are bound by the love of Christ in dying for them, to employ all that they have and are to promote his glory. — But to stand aloof—to do nothing, give nothing, etc., while others are a willing sacrifice, must, of necessity, lead to doubts as to such person's vitality.

 Worldly conformity; vain and trifling conversation; association with the ungodly unnecessarily; extreme eagerness after worldly substance; neglecting to lay up treasure in heaven, etc.—All these things indicate spiritual declension.—“I stand in doubt of you.”

II. THE IMPROVEMENT TO BE MADE OF THE SUBJECT.

1st. It should lead to the duty of *self-examination*. Is my religion doubtful? Do I come under any of the descriptions given?

2d. It shows *the loss and danger* of persons so characterized. They *lose* spiritual enjoyment, the benefits of faith, the sweets of holy labor, and the influence of Christian hope. While others flourish in the courts of God, they are perpetually exclaiming, “Oh, my lameness, my lameness!”—such a state is *dangerous*. What! if death should come! the loins not girded—the lamp not burning! And to go to the bar of judgment in such a state would be to hear, “Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity; I never knew you.”

3d. It should lead to repentance and faith in the Redeemer's sacrifice. “Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, which are ready to die.”

4th. While Christians exercise a godly jealousy over others, let them watch with much greater jealousy over themselves. When Christ told his disciples that one of them should betray him, every one, except the traitor, said, “Lord, is it I?” We may be jealous of others, but we should not be anxious to judge them; but we should be jealous of, and judge ourselves. 1 Cor. 11:31. Is there a mote in our brother's eye? Probably there is a beam in our own. Matt. 7:1-5.

THE WORD OF SALVATION.

“To you is the word of this salvation sent.”—Acts 13:26.

THE grand theme of the Christian ministry is the deliverance of the soul from the awful effects of sin. This subject is called “the word of this salvation,” or message, or doctrine of salvation, which is to be proclaimed throughout the globe. — No other doctrine has ever been attended with such powerful effects, and no other theme of ministration is fraught with so much interest, and productive of so much

good. Mere moral preaching, scholastic preaching, scientific or philosophical preaching, may please the carnal taste of some hearers; but the proclamation of the crucified can best soften the heart, and bring the soul captive to the footstool of Divine mercy. See this verified in the preaching of the Apostles. That, attended by the energy of heaven, confounded the Jewish hierarchy, exposed their formality and hypocrisy, the futile schemes of human philosophy, and struck their oracles dumb. — Wherever the Gospel was preached multitudes of souls believed and were saved. Notice

I. THE SALVATION SENT.

1st. *The import of salvation.*

Salvation supposes misery, danger, or exposure to death; and deliverance, in some way, from that peril.

In a spiritual sense, it implies, —

(1.) That mankind are naturally in a *lost condition*. Matt. 15 : 24; Luke 19 : 10. God is an all-sufficient good, and he alone can bestow real happiness. But men by sin are estranged; they have lost all that good, and are now children of wrath. Eph. 2 : 3. They have lost the Divine image, the beautiful garment of holiness, and are now covered with sin and folly.

(2.) Mankind are *alienated from the life of God*. They have no communion with him; they are all gone out of the way of holiness, into the paths of sin, shame, and misery. Rom. 3 : 11, 12, 16, 17.

(3.) They are also *rebels against the great Sovereign of the universe*. They have broken his law, and are under its curse. Rom. 3 : 19. They have destroyed themselves in body and soul. Hosea 13 : 9. Their bodies are subject to disease, pain, mortality, and corruption. Their understanding is darkened, hearts hardened, and consciences defiled. — The curse of the law implies not only suffering the present effects of sin, but future inflictions of Divine wrath. "The soul that sinneth shall die." "Tribulation and anguish," etc. "The wages of sin is death."

2d. Salvation was effected by Jesus Christ. The word salvation always, in Scripture, implies the recovery of man from the effects of transgression, and the enjoyment of the Divine favor in this world, and in that which is to come. See Matt. 1 : 21; Tit. 3 : 5; Heb. 5 : 9.

Salvation has its *origin in grace*. Man could not save himself. "God so loved," etc. "Herein is love," etc.

To effect this salvation, Christ became incarnate — and ultimately *gave his life as a sacrifice*. See Isa. 53 : 4-6; Rom. 3 : 24-26, and many other passages. — Think what sufferings were endured — what a price was paid for the ransom of the soul! Then Jesus became the *surety* for the vilest of the vile; he was bound as a criminal, and died as a malefactor, that the sinner might be free. He drank the bitter cup of Divine fury, and suffered the vengeance of eternal fire, that sinners might not perish, but have everlasting life.

3d. *Observe the operation of salvation* when realized by the sinners.

(1.) It delivers from *insensibility*. The man is exposed to danger, and he feels it not. — He is hanging over the gulf of perdition, and feels not his danger. — But the Spirit accompanies the proclamation of this salvation, and he is aroused, alarmed, convinced, and exclaims, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" He trifles no longer, but immediately rushes to the refuge, to lay hold of the hope set before him.

(2.) He is saved from all *guilt and condemnation*. It is the first blessing received in redemption. Eph. 1 : 7. It is stipulated in the covenant. Isa. 43 : 25 ; Jer. 31 : 33, 34. Peter declares the same thing. Acts 13 : 38. It is the grand design of the Gospel ministry. Acts 26 : 18 ; Col. 2 : 14.

There is complete *justification*. Rom. 8 : 1 ; Isa. 12 : 1, etc.

(3.) It is deliverance from the *power of a corrupt nature*, and a new creation in Christ Jesus. "Wherefore, if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature," etc. It is an entire change of heart, so that the fruit will now be unto holiness. See this taught in Rom. 6. Eph. 4 : 22, 23, 26.

(4.) It is a deliverance from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Gal. 3 : 26 ; Rom. 8 : 14-17.

(5.) Deliverance from the *sting of death*, and the *power of the grave*. Heb. 2 : 14, 15 ; 1 Cor. 15 : 54-57.

(6.) It is connected with *eternal glory*. It is preparatory to it—it is the earnest of it.

II. THE COMMISSION OF THIS SALVATION. It is "sent."

It was sent first by the Apostles. Jesus Christ commissioned them to preach it to every creature—to go into all the world. Mark 16 : 13, 14 ; Luke 24 : 46, 47.

1st. *To whom it is sent*. It was sent first to his murderers. And now this salvation is sent,—

(1.) To all classes and degrees of men. The rich and the poor, the wise and the ignorant.

(2.) To men whatever be their degrees of moral guilt. To the moralist and the profane ; the pharisee and the publican ; the decent and the degraded. "All manner of sin," etc. ; to the thousand as well as the ten thousand pence debtor.

(3.) To men of all ages—the young and the old.

(4.) To every creature, whether Jew or Gentile, etc., etc.

2d. *By whom it is sent*. By men, and not by angels. 2 Cor. 5 : 20 ; 4 : 7.

3d. *For what purpose it is sent*. Not to be trifled with, sported with, criticised, or mocked. But to be *received and believed*.

APPLICATION.

1st. Admire the love of God in bringing salvation so near. Rom. 10 : 6, 8; Isa. 46 : 12, 13.

2d. Those who neglect it cannot escape. Heb. 2 : 3.

3d. Let believers anticipate the completion of their salvation in heaven. "Now is your salvation nearer than when you believed."

THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS TO STUDY CHRIST.

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." — Heb. 3 : 1.

THE kindness of a friend, the gifts of a benefactor, or the forgiveness of the offended, are long cherished by the grateful heart. It would be base ingratitude to forget. — Jesus is the Benefactor of the Church. What he has done for his people, no human mind can fully conceive, no tongue can tell. But he "loved the Church, and gave himself for it." — Should he then be forgotten? His character, his love, his deeds, ought to be considered constantly. — It would be black ingratitude for one ransomed by the shedding of his blood, to forget Christ, his Substitute, his Ransomer. Hence the text. — No one on earth, or in heaven, deserves consideration more than he.

I. THE DESIGNATION OF THE PERSONS CALLED UPON TO CONSIDER CHRIST.

They are called *holy brethren*, and *partakers of the heavenly calling*. Such language implies, —

1st. That they have *become the subjects of renovating and adopting grace*. — Formerly, they were not "brethren," but aliens, outcasts, enemies. Eph. 2 : 1-6, 19-22. — They have been *convinced of their dreadful state of alienation from God, and have been reconciled to God through Christ*. — Their sins have been pardoned — their souls have been *justified* — and *regenerated*. Col. 1 : 21, 22.

2d. They have *united with God's people*, and are consecrated to his service. "They have given themselves first to the Lord," etc. They are "*brethren*," by relation and affection. Matt. 23 : 9; 1 John 3 : 2, 11, 12, 18; see also ch. 4.

3d. They are "*holy brethren*." This will be the result of the aforementioned change. Holy, not only in profession and title, but in principle and practice, in heart and life. — They are consecrated, set apart for the service and enjoyment of God.

4th. They are called "*partakers of the heavenly calling*." — Their first call is heavenly. It is the Spirit's voice and power that speaks, and operates upon their hearts. All comes from heaven. "It is not by might," etc. John 1 : 13. Human instrumentality without heavenly aid would be nothing. "Paul may plant," etc. "The weapons of our

warfare," etc. "We have this treasure," etc. They are called to *heavenly privileges* ——— to *heavenly employments*, even on earth ——— *heavenly hopes*, and finally to *heaven* itself. They "die in the Lord." What a heavenly call that will be! "Come, ye blessed," etc. They are "partakers" of all this. God has graciously remembered them, with a call from heaven to heaven. "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

II. THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS TO CONSIDER CHRIST. Observe, —

1st. *The Object of consideration.* ——— He is called "the Apostle," etc. Among the Jews, the high priest was considered to be also the apostle of God. The Apostle here exhorts Christians to consider Christ as such; an intimation that the Mosaic economy was at an end, and the priesthood changed. By "profession," or confession, the Apostle means the Christian religion. Jesus was the *Apostle* of the Father, and has given to mankind the *New Covenant*; the whole of Christianity came immediately from him. ——— *Moses* was the *Apostle* under the Old Testament, and *Aaron* the *priest*. When Moses was removed, the prophets succeeded him; and the sons of Aaron were the priests after the death of their father. That system is annulled; and Jesus is the *prophet* who declares the will of God, and he is the *priest* who ministers in the things pertaining to God, ch. 2 : 17. He makes atonement for the sins of his people, and is a Mediator between God and man.

(1.) Consider him in his *delegated character*, "*The Apostle*," prophet, or sent of God. See Heb. 1 : 1, 2, and other passages which speak of him as *sent into the world*. "Him hath God the Father sealed." ——— As a prophet or teacher, he was infinitely wise, tender, benevolent, faithful. He proved the Divinity of his commission by miracles — by perfect holiness of character — and by the revelation of the plan of salvation. He brought life and immortality to light.

(2.) Consider him in his *official character*. "High Priest."

In the priesthood, he was infinitely superior to Aaron and his successors. ——— As they were Divinely appointed to the office, so was Christ, Heb. 5 : 4, 5, 6. ——— Hence

This Great High Priest is styled "*Christ Jesus*." *Christ* is the same as *Messiah*, and means *anointed*, John 1 : 41. *Jesus* is the same with *Joshua*, Heb. 4 : 8; and *Joshua* is a contraction for *Jah Oseah*, the former of which signifies *God*, and the latter, *Saviour*, the import of this appellation, "*Christ Jesus*," the *Anointed Divine Saviour*.

Now, in this character, consider,

The dignity and glory of his character, as represented in this epistle. See ch. 1.

As the great atoning sacrifice. This is frequently stated in the epistle.

As the Conqueror of Death, ch. 2 : 14, 15.

As the exalted Saviour, and prevailing Intercessor, ch. 2 : 9; 4 : 14; 7 : 24, 25; 8 : 1; etc. He presents the offerings of his people — bears them on his breast-plate, and makes known to them the will of God.

As infinite in compassion, ch. 2 : 17, 18; 4 : 14, 15. He himself has

submitted to poverty, endured persecution from men, temptation from Satan, desertion from God, bodily infliction, and tasted death, etc.

As the finisher of his people's salvation, ch. 9 : 28 ; 12 : 2. Then shall they resemble him, and reign forever with him.

2d. *The Duty*, "Consider." In every season — with attention, with faith — with affection — with gratitude.

APPLICATION.

1st. Christ is not so much thought of as he deserves, and desires to be.

2d. Consideration of Christ will be advantageous. It will increase knowledge, faith, love, joy.

3d. Consider Christ as presented in the Scriptures, and not from any vain and fanciful conceptions of your own.

THE JOURNEY OF GOD'S RANSOMED PEOPLE TO HEAVEN.

"And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads ; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." — Isa. 35 : 10.

It is a glorious privilege to have an interest in the Divine favor ; for whatever be the toils of the Christian pilgrim, or the conflicts of the Christian warrior, God is his refuge, his present and his future salvation. — The hope of victory animates the general in the midst of the contest ; and the prospect of home comforts the pilgrim amidst the dangers of the journey. — The believer on earth is contending with enemies, numerous, powerful, and malicious ; but he is animated with the hope of a most triumphant victory. He is a pilgrim surrounded by many dangers ; exposed to many storms ; but he rejoices in the prospect of a glorious home — and that home is heaven.

This chapter may refer to the prosperity of Hezekiah's kingdom, during the latter part of his reign ; or to the return from the Babylonish captivity ; but it is evident, from the peculiarity of the language, that there is a reference to the kingdom of Christ on earth, and in heaven.

I. THE CHARACTER OF THE PEOPLE WHO JOURNEY TO HEAVEN.
"The ransomed of the Lord." As they are now "ransomed," it implies,

1st. *They were once captives.* All sinners are the captives of *Satan*, that formidable tyrant ; he possesses their hearts, and keeps them in a state of dreadful, but voluntary bondage. 2 Tim. 2 : 26. — They are slaves to their own *corruptions and lusts*, which like so many massy fetters, bind them fast, and they are "*sold under sin.*" They dream of liberty, but are the worst of slaves. Rom. 7 : 23. — They are also prisoners to the *Divine law*, and *justice* demands their life as a sacrifice. A debt they owe which they cannot discharge, and a punishment is to

be inflicted which they cannot endure. — Captives are frequently *put to death*, and “the soul that sinneth shall die.”

2d. *They could not ransom themselves.* The price was too great for such insolvents to pay. Rev. 3 : 17.

3d. It was the work of an *Almighty Saviour to ransom the captives.* He alone could pay the price, even “the precious blood of Christ.” Hence it is said, “he gave himself a ransom for many, and a ransom for all,” etc. He is called the *Redeemer*, and his people the *redeemed*, Eph. 1 : 7 ; Col. 1 : 14. Remember, ye ransomed ones, that your freedom was purchased by amazing *condescension, privations, sufferings, and death.* — It was effected by him who “opens the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sat in darkness out of the prison-house.” Isa. 42 ; Luke 4 : 18.

4th. They are *ransomed to be the Lord’s people.* Now they are his property, children, servants, jewels, treasure. They are no longer slaves, but the Lord’s freemen. They now love and serve him, and promote his glory. See Titus 2 : 14.

II. THE NATURE OF THEIR JOURNEY. “The ransomed of the Lord shall return.”

1st. They are *enlightened to know and feel their state of captivity.* They therefore long for deliverance.

2d. They return to God by repentance and faith in Christ, the great ransomers.

3d. *They unite with the Church of God—the Zion below.* “They first give themselves to the Lord,” etc. This is the source of joy. Hence their songs. So the Jailor and others rejoiced in God: the Eunuch went on his way rejoicing.

More particularly,

4th. The ransomed of the Lord are *journeying towards heaven.* “Shall return and come to Zion with songs.” Zion is one of the names of heaven. The Jewish temple being situated on Mount Zion, was so denominated; and even the worshippers were called Zion. Ps. 65 : 1 ; 84 : 7. Heaven will be the place of fellowship, of worship, etc. It is called *Zion.* See Heb. 12 : 22 ; Rev. 14 : 1.

This is the place to which they are “journeying”—the “city of the living God;” the “heavenly Jerusalem;” the inheritance which is incorruptible, etc.,—the celestial temple of God. “And I saw no temple therein;” for it is *one temple*; the worshippers are unsectarian; they “are of one heart, one mind, one soul.” It is the land of immortality; where sickness shall never spread, languor or decay; over those heavenly mansions death will never hover, etc. etc.

5th. They travel on, depending upon God. “The life which they live in the flesh,” etc. They feel themselves weak, but they depend upon the promises, “My grace,” etc. “Fear thou not; for I am with thee,” etc.

6th. *They travel joyfully.* “Come to Zion with songs.” Songs of grateful praise to their great Deliverer, and Conductor. — Songs of confidence in his power and love. — Songs of joyful anticipation. — Songs of ultimate triumph.

III. ITS BLISSFUL TERMINATION. "They shall come to Zion," etc.

They shall certainly arrive in heaven. "God, who is able to keep them from falling," etc. "He who hath begun a good work in them," etc. They shall finish their course with joy. What a blissful termination! What are other journeys, enterprises, etc., compared with this? Ordinary travellers have accumulated treasures of silver, and gold, and jewels. But the termination of the Christian's course is not succeeded by such worthless trifles, but by "an exceeding and eternal weight of glory." The text informs us,

1st. That the Christian travellers *shall receive a crown*. "Everlasting joy upon their heads." The possession of an earthly crown is the source of joy. So the crown of life will afford joy in heaven. They shall be made "kings and priests unto God," etc. Here they are counted as mean and base, but there they will be recognized as the seed-royal of heaven. Here they wear a crown of thorns, but there they will wear a diadem of glory.

It will be an *incorruptible* crown, not a fading laurel, etc. 1 Cor. 9: 25. No length of time will terminate the dominion of the saints, or tarnish the lustre of their crowns. They shall reign forever and ever. — It is called a *crown of righteousness*, 2 Tim. 4: 7. It was purchased by the righteousness of Christ, and is given, wholly for his sake, to none but the righteous. It has been honorably purchased for them, not by injustice, but by the death of Christ. "Mercy and truth met together," etc. James 1; 12; Rev. 2: 10. — It is a *crown of life*, meaning they shall never die — a *crown of gold*, Rev. 4: 4, to denote the invaluable and lasting honor to which they will be advanced, and the superlative wealth of the kingdom which they will possess. — Hence the New Jerusalem, and all the streets of the Holy City, are said to be of the purest and brightest gold, as it were transparent glass; and the elders around the throne have on their heads crowns of gold. Observe,

2d. *Their great felicity*. "They shall obtain joy and gladness;" arising from their arrival in glory — their conquest over all their enemies — the extension of their capacities — the vision of God — the society of angels and perfected spirits — and their progressive acquisition of Divine knowledge. What sources of joy and gladness are here!

3d. They shall be perfectly and eternally *exempt from all distress*. "Sorrow and sighing shall flee away." This must be the case, if they wear crowns of joy, of life, of gold, etc.; if they see God, and are the companions of angels. It must be the case, if they dwell in heaven. No sigh, no groan was ever heaved, or heard there. No heart ever ached there. No soul was ever wrung with anguish there. No tears were ever wept there. "God shall wipe away," etc. Rev. 21: 4. — There will be immortal health, therefore no dread of sickness or death; immortal wealth, and therefore no dread of poverty and want; perfect and eternal holiness, and therefore no dread of sin; everlasting security and salvation, and therefore no dread of Satan or hell. Every cloud has vanished — all darkness has rolled away; and the saints are perfectly happy in the inheritance of light.

APPLICATION.

1st. Christians, see your obligations to Christ. From him, all your present, and all your future happiness, is derived.

2d. Let the hope of so much glory support you under the trials and difficulties of life. Rest and glory are before you.

3d. Continue your pilgrimage; think of its end; prepare for it: it may come when you are not aware.

CHRIST AN EXAMPLE.

"Leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps."—1 PET. 2: 21.

WHEN Peter wrote his epistle, the Church was exposed to much persecution; he therefore reminds them that Christ, who was possessed of all moral excellence, had suffered before them, and indeed was an example of fortitude, resignation, and patience to them.——His atonement also would be a source of consolation amid the perils to which they were exposed.

Christ was not merely an example of fortitude, etc., under suffering, but he was an example of all virtue.——Were the world to be generally influenced by that example, what a different moral aspect would it bear! All human expedients and systems to render man virtuous and happy are ineffective, when put in competition with the Gospel, and the example of its Author. These form a lever destined by Infinite Wisdom ultimately to raise man from the pit of moral defilement and wretchedness.——

I. CONSIDER CHRIST AS THE GREAT EXAMPLE OR PATTERN OF HIS CHURCH.

This is taught throughout the Scriptures. 1 John 2: 6. He that becomes a *Christian* is required to *follow Christ*; and if truly converted, this will certainly be the case. See John 13: 15; 12: 26; 1 Cor. 11: 1; Phil. 2: 5; Heb. 12: 2, 3. Observe,

1st. *The nature of man is such as to require an example for his imitation.* The moral precepts are already expressed—the nature of holiness defined, and the Scriptures direct us, in the simplest manner, how to follow after it. But as men are universally influenced by example more than by precept, a perfect model of morality is absolutely necessary.——The example of another may indicate that the duty which we are enjoined to perform is practicable, and from thence we may also learn how holiness is to be attained, and how perfected in the fear of God. An acquaintance with the writings and lives of men eminent for piety, is for the same reason highly advantageous. Inter-course and association with men in whom the graces of the Spirit flourish, must also have a transforming influence.

2d. *The best of men, having numerous imperfections, are not fit to*

become our example in everything. — Much advantage may doubtless be derived from an acquaintance with their spirit and conduct, especially if distinguished for close walking with God. Much will be found worthy of imitation in their self-denial, ardent zeal, humility, patience, and devotedness to God; but the best of men are liable to err both in judgment and practice. They cordially unite with Paul, "O wretched man," etc., or with Job, "Wherefore, I abhor," etc. "Ah! how different is my life from that of the great Exemplar!" — It would therefore be unsafe to call any man master, or to set him up as our example in everything. We are to follow good men as far as they follow Christ, but no further, 1 Cor. 11 : 1.

3d. *The Supreme Being*, the fountain of all excellence, is *not a model suited for our imitation*, on account of the supereminence of his perfections. — He is himself the standard of all moral goodness, and we are commanded to be perfect, even as our Father who is in heaven is perfect; and to be holy because he is holy! Yet on account of the infinite disparity between God and us, his perfections are the object of *adoration* rather than of our imitation, except in a very humble and subordinate degree.

4th. The Son of God incarnate exhibited an example *perfectly adapted to our circumstances*, and that pattern we are commanded to copy. His example was perfect. He always performed and entered that which was perfectly right. He "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." He was the true representative of all real excellence, both human and Divine. He was so the brightness of his Father's glory, and so expressly the image of his person, that he could say to his disciples, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father. I and my Father are one." At the same time, however, he displayed all the attributes of our nature; was in all things made like unto his brethren, and is touched, etc.

Observe some of those traits in the Redeemer's character to which his people must be conformed:

(1.) *His perfect humility.* This he exhibited throughout his sojourn on earth. — None could say with equal propriety, "Learn of me." Matt. 11 : 28. When he came into the world, he did not assume any external dignity, neither did he display his native glory, but veiled himself in flesh, and took on him the form of a servant, Phil. 1 : 6. — He sought not the praise of men, but always endeavored to avoid it. When, on the banks of Jordan, testimony was borne from heaven that he was the well-beloved Son of God, instead of waiting for the plaudits of the multitude, he immediately retired into the wilderness. — When he wrought miracles, he charged the people not to make him known. No ostentation was visible in any part of his conduct, Matt. 12 : 19; Isa. 42 : 2. — How different his conduct from that exhibited by man, whose heart is full of pride! — and from that of Christians, who are sometimes tempted to love the praise of men more than the praise of God!

(2.) Observe next *his self-denial.* His whole life was one continued exemplification of this virtue; he sought not his own glory, ease, or comfort, and he pleased not himself. Notice Matt. 20 : 27, 28; 2 Cor. 8 : 9. No avaricious, ambitious, proud, or sensual desire, found a place

in his breast. Every selfish aim was excluded from his heart, every unworthy act from his life! Omniscience itself, looking into his soul with a perfect survey, saw nothing but pure excellence, supreme beauty, and divine loveliness; a sun, without a spot; a splendor, formed of mere diversities of light and glory. — Such self-denial is made essential to our being his disciples, Matt. 16 : 24, 25.

(3.) Christ exhibited *perfect obedience to his Father's will, and he supremely regarded his honor*. He appeared on earth to accomplish the work which his Father had appointed him. He did it, and at the close of his life said, "Father, I have glorified thee," etc. John 17 : 4. His obedience was prompt and cheerful, constant and universal; he always did those things that pleased his heavenly Father; it was his meat, etc. The whole language of his heart, on which the whole conduct of his life was a glorious comment, was, "Not my will but thine be done." The honor of his Father's law was to him the dearest of all concerns, and to atone for its violation, he, at last, offered himself a sacrifice, Heb. 10 : 8, 9. — This is the pattern which we should always set before us; this the piety, at which we should unceasingly aim.

(4.) The life of the Redeemer was distinguished by *vast beneficence*. His love was literally universal, and his acts of goodness were correspondent. It was dictated by no idle dreams of philosophy, by no cobweb system of abstraction, but by plain, practical truth; therefore his beneficence was real, useful, uniformly honorable to himself, and invariably profitable to mankind. — He went about doing good, healing all manner of sickness, etc. His whole conduct was governed by that glorious principle, "It is more blessed to give than to receive!" He did not sit down in despair, with sighs, and groans, and tears, because the requirements for his beneficence were universal. He did not satisfy himself with lamenting the distresses of men, and teaching others to relieve them. He gave the example, and did relieve them. — Towards his disciples, he was all tenderness and love; towards his enemies, he was full of mercy and forgiveness. He sought the salvation of sinners. — When his course on earth was finished, he went to the altar of his cross, and there, proclaimed to the universe, his *infinite love*, by expiating human transgression. —

(5.) He was an example of *patience and submission under sufferings*. See 1 Pet. 2 : 21-23. — Job exhibited a pattern of patience, but not a perfect one; but when Jesus was afflicted and oppressed, he opened not his mouth, but even prayed for his murderers, Isa. 53 : 7; Luke 23 : 34. — The heathen could say, "The Gods themselves behold not a nobler spectacle than a good man firmly enduring adversity." Christ was supremely good, and encountered extreme adversity. The patience with which he submitted, and the heroic firmness with which he endured his trials, invest his character with a greatness and a glory to which there can be no parallel.

II. THAT THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST IS TO BE IMITATED. "Follow his steps."

1st. That this example *ought to be constantly studied*. By reading his word, and marking his conduct. The disciple must understand the character of his Master — the child the character of his Father.

2d. The superexcellence of his character should produce *humility*,

self-abasement, repentance, and an application for Divine forgiveness.
 ——— How little have we imitated him!

3d. It should *induce prayer for Divine grace* to enable us to follow him. He gives grace to imitate himself, 2 Cor. 8 : 17, 18.

4th. Imitation of Christ is *not optional* but *authoritative*. See 1 John 2 : 6; John 13 : 15; John 12 : 26. ——— And if this authority be regarded, it will be a convincing proof of true *Christian Discipleship*. John 13 : 24, 25. The example of Christ is not merely a bright and beautiful pattern which we are invited to copy, because this conduct will be pleasing, honorable, and useful to us; but it is a *law* also, requiring of us, with Divine authority, to “go, and do likewise.” The obligation to obey is indispensable. Nor can any man be excused for a moment, who does not labor to resemble Christ in all the personal and moral parts of his character.

APPLICATION.

1st. Are you observing the “steps” of Christ, and following them?

2d. How hateful must sin and sinners be when compared with the great Exemplar!

3d. Be thankful that the perfection of virtue was exemplified by Christ; for this perfection of character was essential to his office as the Great High Priest of Salvation. “Such an High Priest became us, who is holy,” etc. Heb. 7 : 26.

PRAYER VANQUISHING ENEMIES.

“When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back; this I know, for God is for me.” — Ps. 56 : 9.

In the time of danger, it is a great privilege to have a refuge. ——— David had this, and so have all true Christians. See Ps. 46. The Psalm from which the text is taken was written by David when, pursued by Saul, he took refuge among the Philistines. See 1 Sam. 27 : 1, etc. Then he prayed to God, and was delivered.

I. THIS PRAYER IMPLIES THE EXISTENCE OF CONFLICT.

David had powerful enemies; he was pursued from place to place by his adversaries. ——— The Christian too has many *enemies*. Within him, and around him. His own heart — his adverse circumstances — the world, with its smiles and its frowns — Satan, an inveterate foe, etc. These hunt after his precious soul, Eph. 6 : 11–13.

II. THIS PRAYER SUPPOSES HELPLESSNESS.

What is man without Divine aid? Nothing. “Without me ye can do nothing.” All good men have found this to be true. David, in this instance, found himself unable to overcome, unless God undertook for him. The enemies which the Christian has to fight are numerous, potent, and subtle; and he is perfect weakness. ——— It implies,

III. A CONVICTION THAT THERE IS ALL NEEDFUL HELP IN GOD.

Hence he is called a refuge, a fortress, a shield, a tower of defence, and a very present help in time of trouble. He says, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Consider what deliverances he has wrought—how many through him have conquered—what promises he has made—and that his power, and love, and immutability, are all engaged for the salvation of his people. See Deut. 33 : 29. It further implies,

IV. APPLICATION TO GOD FOR HELP.

"I cry unto thee." As in a new-born infant, the first effort of life is crying, so in a new-born soul it is prayer. Hence the dangers are stated to God—the complaints and wants are poured into his ear. "Call upon me in the day of trouble," etc. I cannot deliver myself—help thou me. "Strengthen me with all might," etc. Make me a conqueror, etc.

This cry we must consider as *secret*, — *earnest* — and *constant*, and connected with confidence.

V. THIS PRAYER WAS SUCCESSFUL.

"Then shall mine enemies turn back." This is expected from immutable promises. "No weapon," etc. Isa. 54 : 17. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation." 2 Pet. 3 : 9. "If God be for us," etc. Pleading the promises in the name of Christ will be successful. When Moses interceded for Israel, he pleaded the promise and faithfulness of God, and the prayer of faith was answered, Exod. 32 : 10–14. When Solomon prayed for the people of Israel, his plea was founded on the covenant of promise, and his prayer was answered, 1 Kings 8 : 25. Hezekiah did the same, and was successful, Isa. 37 : 14. The Apostles pleaded in the name of Jesus, and this must be all our plea, Acts 4 : 30.

God will cause our pursuing enemies to turn back, for can they fight with Omnipotence? Or he will give unto us grace, Divine armor, to enable us to stand and conquer in the evil day.

David was fully persuaded of success: "This, I know; for God is for me." — He looked back, and considered what he had done—how his providence had guided and guarded him—how frequently he had delivered him—and he was the same God still. — God is for his people with all his attributes—he is their father, and he will protect and deliver his children. Not a hair of their heads shall perish. "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye." God is for them and constantly with them; "I will never leave thee," etc. "My presence shall go with thee," etc. "Fear thou not, for I am with thee," etc.

APPLICATION.

1st. How great the privilege of having an interest in the Divine favor!

2d. How exposed and wretched is the sinner!

GROWTH IN GRACE.

"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth," etc. — 2 Thess. 1 : 3, 4.

How important it is to "let our light so shine"! etc. — that others may take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus. Where true religion exists, it will show itself. — And when this is the case, the Church is honored, the wicked see the excellency of religion, and God is glorified. — The Church at Thessalonica was in a very prosperous state, and happy would it be if churches at the present day could be so addressed. — But alas! many churches present a very different aspect!

I. WHAT ARE THE INDICATIONS OF GROWTH IN GRACE?

In reference to the Thessalonians, their spiritual progress was manifested: 1st. By their faith growing exceedingly. 2d. By their abundant charity. 3d. By patience in all their persecutions and tribulations. Let these three indications be considered in order, and regarded as the fruits by which it will be known who are Christ's disciples. — It is evident from the phraseology in the text, and from many other passages, that sanctification is *progressive*. "Grow in grace," etc. "Add unto your faith virtue," etc., 2 Pet. 1 : 5; 3 : 18. It is like the kingdom of heaven in the world, which is compared to a grain of mustard seed — also to leaven. Real Christians, then, go from strength to strength in Zion. As time advances, their souls advance in holiness. The longer they live to enjoy the means of grace, the stronger becomes their faith — the more vigorous their hope, etc. etc.

Spiritual progression, too, is *visible*. Men saw it in the Thessalonians — the Apostles heard of it; it was a beautifully pleasing growth that attracted the gaze of the multitude. It was so genuine and brilliant, that the Apostles proclaimed it to other churches, verse 4th. — Observe,

1st. *Their faith grew exceedingly*. Faith is an important principle. In the exercise of this, the Christian life commences; it lays hold on Christ and receives pardon and acceptance with God, adoption into his family, and intercourse with himself. But faith is a constant and progressive grace; it commences the Christian life, and, instrumentally, it consummates it, when it is lost in sight. But it has to do with every intervening state, conflict, or trial, through which the Christian is called to pass. See Heb. 11. Its progress, and its strength, may be ascertained especially during those seasons. This growth will be evidenced,

(1.) By a *proper attention to all those exercises by which faith will be increased*. The glorious Gospel of the blessed God will be delighted in and constantly studied. The character of Christ, his works, his love,

his sacrifice, etc., will be constantly investigated, in order to grow more "in the knowledge of Jesus Christ."——The growth of faith depends upon the accumulation of knowledge.——The ministry of the word will be constantly attended; the Bible will not be a neglected book. See Ps. 1 : 2, 3; Prov. 6 : 20-23. The Scriptures will be treasured in the memory. Col. 3 : 16.——Christian intercourse also tends to the advance of faith——

(2.) It will be evidenced by *an increasing acquaintance* with the mind of God, as revealed in the Scriptures. Reading, hearing, studying, and conversing about Christ, must lead to the acquisition of Divine knowledge.——We may be led to believe the Gospel in one day, but it will take some time to become rooted and grounded, etc., or to be able to say, "I know whom," etc. We may believe what is true from being told that it is so; but this will be of little advantage, unless we perceive the authority on which it rests, etc. And this is of the utmost importance in these days of infidelity and scepticism——to be able to give a reason, etc.

(3.) It will show itself by *increasing attachment to the doctrines of Christianity*, and a *disposition* to advocate and defend them.——This was evidenced by Paul. "He was determined not to know anything," etc. "God forbid," etc. He loved them so as to fear no frowns, nor to dread even death. "I am set for the defence of the Gospel."——Christ is precious to believers, and they love him, and will defend his truth—the doctrines of the Gospel.

(4.) It will show itself by *a full consecration* of body and soul to promote the Redeemer's kingdom in the world. He who died for us expects this; "Lovest thou me?"——It is eminently the work of faith to spread the cause of Christ, and an evidence that faith is alive, and progressing. Hence the Apostles were willing to spend, and be spent for Christ.——The talents of the mind, and the contribution of money, etc., will not be withheld.

(5.) By *increasing deadness to the world*. The more faith discovers of the beauty and glory of the Saviour, and the splendors of that heavenly country to which the Christian is bound, the more worthless will this world appear. See 1 John 2 : 15; 5 : 4.

2d. The *charity*, or love, of the *Thessalonians towards each other abounded*. Where faith grows, love will abound, for faith works by love. Not only the charity of some few of them, but of every one to each other, did abound. Growth in faith and brotherly love are connected together as *cause and effect*.——The same principle which produces attachment to the truth, will attach Christians to one another for the truth's sake. Christ is the centre of union; all who love him are taught of God to love one another.——The abounding of brotherly love implies the existence of *union, harmony*. There was no discord.——They loved one another not in word only, etc.——Christians may live agreeably together and love as friends, but to love as brethren is quite another thing.——They may love because they are of the same mind, but not on account of their being of the mind of Christ. Or suppose true brotherly love may exist, yet it may not "*abound*."

Observe, Brotherly love is *general*, and *not partial*; it loves all the brethren——it is *sympathetic*; it weeps with those who weep, etc.;—it is *discriminating*; it searches out the brother in distress; it is *active*, and not merely professional; pitying, and not relieving. It *does* good to the household of faith.

3d. The Thessalonians had also *great patience* in all their trials, verse 4th, and this was an evidence of increasing piety—it is to be like Christ. If we faint in the day of adversity, our strength is small. Faith believes that all things work together for good, etc. Faith anticipates future rest and glory through grace, and patience calms the mind, and waits for the promise. “Be patient, brethren, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.” Faith lays hold of this promise.——

II. THAT PROGRESS IN THE DIVINE LIFE MUST BE ATTRIBUTED TO THE GRACE OF GOD.

This the Apostle intimates when he speaks of being “bound to thank God, as it is meet.” All that is evil belongs to ourselves, all that is good comes from God; it is he that worketh all our works in us. Eph. 2 : 8; Phil. 2 : 13. It is evident that these Christians had at first felt their faith, etc., to be weak——that they had felt their own insufficiency to promote their spirituality——that they acknowledged God as alone able to increase it, and earnestly prayed to him for it; “Lord, I believe,” etc.——“Lord, increase our faith.”

Thanks must be given to God; for it is *meet*. Nothing must be ascribed to the creature. The Apostle did not praise *them*; he thanked *God*. And those who, like him, have felt themselves to be “the chief of sinners, will, to their dying hour, feel “bound” to “thank” God for the power of his grace on themselves and others.

III. THE IMPORTANT INFLUENCE OF THIS GROWTH IN GRACE.

1st. It will *glorify God*, verse 12; see John 15 : 8. To the world it shows what religion can do.——By their devotedness to seek the salvation of men, and the happiness of their brethren, God must be glorified.

2d. By this growth in faith, *the cavils of infidels are checked*, and the nakedness of their systems is exposed.

3d. It is very *encouraging* to *faithful ministers* of the Gospel, showing they labor not in vain, etc. How distressing to their minds, when persons for years sit under their ministry and make no progress! Heb. 5 : 11. On the contrary, see Rom. 1 : 11, 12; Acts 11 : 23.

4th. Making no progress, *produces doubt and fear*.——Hence the slothful, the formal, in Zion, have, in their serious moments, painful anxiety. How different they are from what they should be!——True Christians advance—grow up in the image and likeness of God. Prov. 4 : 18; 1 Pet. 2 : 2; 2 Pet. 1 : 5-8.

5th. If progress is not made, the soul must be *declining* and going backward. There is no standing still in the race, or in the fight.——If we grow not in faith and love, the seeds of indifference and unbelief will grow in their place—and choke the word, rendering it unfruitful.

CHRIST THE PHYSICIAN OF THE SOUL.

PART I.

"They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." — MATT. 9 : 12.

THE body is liable to numerous diseases, and anxiety and efforts to effect a cure of them, are highly important. — But how possible it is to attend to those wants and diseases, while the demands of the soul are neglected! What time and money will people expend to restore bodily health! — How few will make sacrifices and submit to Gospel prescriptions, to promote the health of the immortal spirit! — The design of Christ's coming was to save the soul, and this purpose he declared to the chief of sinners. The circumstance which occasioned the declaration of the proverb in the text, is stated verses 11, 12. He who, like the Pharisee, never felt himself indebted to Infinite mercy for his own salvation, will never be solicitous about the salvation of others. The grace of Christ alone inspires the soul with true benevolence. The self-righteous Pharisee considered it equal to legal defilement to sit in company with tax-gatherers, and heathen.

Jesus, in reply to the Pharisees, said, "The whole," etc. Sick persons only need his aid. A physician would not commonly be found with the healthy. His proper place was among the sick. "If you Pharisees reckon yourselves pure and holy, you do not need my aid. It would be of no use to you, and you would not thank me for it. With those who feel themselves sinners, I may be useful; and there is my proper place. I came on purpose to save sinners. My business is with them. There are none righteous; and as a physician is in his proper place with the *sick*, so am I with guilty and miserable sinners."

I. THAT MAN IS THE SUBJECT OF SPIRITUAL DISEASE.

In Scripture, sin is frequently compared to a disease; "My wounds," etc., Ps. 38 : 5. "Who healeth," etc., Ps. 103 : 3; "He healeth the broken in heart," etc., Ps. 147 : 3; Isa. 30 : 26; "Is there no balm?" etc., Jer. 8 : 22. As the nature of the disease is generally ascertained by various symptoms, so the moral disease of the soul has its symptoms by which its nature is indicated. The symptoms are,

1st. *Depraved mental appetite.* When the body is diseased, the appetite fails; it no longer delights in suitable and nutritious food. — Man was originally created in health and beauty; then he delighted in God; to serve him was his natural element. But alas! how has the pure gold become dim, etc.; the mind has been warped from its original attitude of purity, and bent and bowed down to the love and idolatry of earthly things. — If the soul of man were in a healthy state, he would delight in God, and take pleasure in prayer and praise, and the ordinances of Divine worship. But these are not palatable to the carnal mind, which is enmity against God. The Gospel, with all its promises and prospects of glory, is the only proper food of man's soul. But the diseased one has no appetite for it; it is all foolishness unto him. Hence

the Scriptures are neglected, and the invitations of the Gospel are treated with contempt.

2d. *The faculty of moral vision is impaired.* "Having the understanding darkened," etc., Eph. 4 : 18; see also 1 Cor. 2 : 14. The character of Deity is revealed in the Bible and throughout creation, in its excellence, its majesty, and its glory; but it has no attractions for the sin-diseased mind, though it fills heaven with wonder and delight. Saints behold Christ as the altogether lovely, and esteem him more precious than rubies; but the diseased sinner says, "He hath no form nor comeliness in him," etc., Isa. 53 : 2. Christians contemplate heaven as their glorious home, and long to depart, and be with Christ, which is far better. But the diseased ones account that as the dream of visionary enthusiasts, and they say, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." They often call darkness light, evil good, bitter sweet, and sometimes do not discriminate the beauty of holiness and the deformity of vice.

3d. *Moral stupor and lethargic disposition of mind.* Some are said to be "*past feeling*," Eph. 4 : 19. Their condition is frequently depicted in the clearest and most affecting manner, but without effect. Truths the most important, and intimately connected with their souls' interests, are frequently addressed to their judgments; but they remain unmoved. Bereavements the most cutting, providences the most alarming, judgments the most startling, afflictions upon them, threatening them with death, yet they remain indifferent, listless, and unmoved. Sinai may issue its lightning flash, and utter its thundering voice, the earth may heave, and the rocks may quake, at the transactions of Calvary, and even the clangor of the last day's judgment trumpet may be heard; but frequently the diseased one is not awakened; he may be startled, and just lift up his head to say, "A little more sleep," etc. "Go thy way for this time," etc. — Even saints have to complain of this moral stupor and lethargy.

"The rocks can rend, the earth can quake,
The seas can roar, the mountains shake;
Of feelings all things show some sign,
But this unfeeling heart of mine.

"To hear the sorrows thou hast felt,
Dear Lord, an adamant would melt;
But I can read each moving line,
And nothing moves this heart of mine.

"Eternal Spirit, mighty God!
Do thou apply the Saviour's blood!
'Tis his rich blood, and his alone,
Can move and melt this heart of stone."

4th. *Feverish excitement of disposition.* Ordinary disease is always attended with some degree of fever. Sometimes it is raging, and is frequently followed by delirium. So sin, the disease of the soul, frequently stimulates the passions, excites to resentment, and blows up the flames of malice and wrath in the breast. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these," etc., Gal. 5 : 19-21. — Hence also the garrulity of a wicked man in the ebullitions of his profanity. His very tongue is diseased. The sinner is frequently incoherent, and raves like a madman. [Here dwell on James 3 : 3-6]. See this feverish excitement manifested by worldly men. How they toil, how

they scheme, plan, and adopt every stratagem which their minds can devise, in order to acquire wealth! They are like the grave, they never say enough. Sometimes the dictates of conscience, and the claims of justice, are violated, in order to obtain money.——Witness the feverish excitement of that miser, who has, for a long time, been starving his body, and damning his soul—for what? a little shining dust which he must surrender at death, for, “Naked came he into the world,” etc., 1 Tim. 6: 7-10, 17, 18.——Witness the feverish excitement of ambitious men, restless for fame, official power, etc., etc.

5th. *Moral weakness and want of activity.* Sinners are said to be *without strength*,—to be dead in trespasses and sins.” “She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.” Can the dead praise God, and yield him service? The powers of the diseased soul are diverted from God, and fixed upon improper objects; in fact, all the powers, talents, and gifts of men, are prostrated at the shrine of carnality, and are covered over with the desolation of death. The ungodly are “the servants of sin.”——Observe,

6th. *Its tendency to eternal death.* It has already consigned the body to death, and, if unchecked, it will consign the soul to death eternal. “The wages of sin is death.” “Sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.” Such is its tendency. It is the death of the soul to all the favor of God, and all the blessings he has promised. Some think sin insignificant, if not innocent. But is it so represented in the Scriptures? This spiritual plague excludes from God, from Christian fellowship, from the society of heaven, and from its eternal weight of glory. Suppose it were possible for a diseased soul to enter heaven, would it engage in their employments? Could it realize their enjoyments?——

But this disease has other peculiar symptoms:

1st. It is *inherent in our constitution.* Some assert and propagate that man is born in a kind of negative state, inclined neither to good nor to evil, and that he receives a bias from education, example, or conversation. But the Scriptures assert the contrary, viz., “that which is born of the flesh, is flesh.” We do not, in the first instance, become affected by that which is contagious, but we come into the world with the seeds of evil in our very nature. Nevertheless this disease

2d. *Is infectious.* “Evil communications corrupt good manners.” One sinner destroyeth much good. Eve caught it, and Adam was immediately tainted with it, and their first-born became the murderer of his brother. See how it spread before the deluge; Gen. 6: 5. See in this respect the influence of parents, governors, men of power, etc.

3d. It is *universal in its extent.* “The whole world lieth in wickedness;” “Every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God.” Some diseases are peculiar to one climate, and affect one rank in preference to another; but this rages in every region, and in every land, from the northern to the southern pole, and from the eastern to the western shores. It manifested itself thousands of years ago, and it yet prevails. It affects all, the monarch and the statesman, equally with the peasant and the clown, and nations the most civilized and savage are alike subject to its influence.

4th. It is *incurable by human agency.* No man can cure himself, or

deliver his fellow from this fatal malady. Every method which the human mind could devise has been tried, but in vain. Legislators have issued edicts, philosophers have delivered lectures, unrivalled for beauty, sublimity, and eloquence; science has cultivated the intellect, and fed it with every species of knowledge — and what has been the result? Still the leprosy of sin rages, and sometimes those the most esteemed among men have afforded the most affecting examples of moral degeneracy.

APPLICATION.

1st. From what has been said, we may ascertain why so few are healed. They are not sensible of their disease, or, if sensible, they will not submit to the Divine Remedy.

2d. Learn the danger of neglecting an application to the Physician of souls. While you delay, the disease is progressing, — progressing towards death.

CHRIST THE PHYSICIAN OF SOULS.

PART II.

“They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.” — MATT. 9 : 12.

It is emphatically said of Christ that “he went about doing good.” This was the benevolent design of his mission into this world. “He came to seek and to save that which was lost.” Sin had converted the world into a desert, a howling wilderness; he came to make it bud and blossom as the rose. Sin had diseased and desolated the soul of man; he came to heal it, and to fill it with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Hence he frequently represented himself as the great Deliverer, the Saviour, the Ransomer, and the Physician. Unrolling the volume of prophecy at Nazareth, he thus addressed the people, Luke 4 : 18, 19.

Having considered the soul as diseased by sin, consider now,

II. CHRIST AS THE PHYSICIAN OF THE SOUL.

The names, titles, and offices of Christ imply this. His language in the text must be regarded as the representation of himself, as the Physician of the soul. He is also called a *Prophet and Teacher*, because he banishes darkness from the mind; a *Ransomer*, because he delivers the soul from Satan; a *Saviour*, because he absolves it from guilt; a *High Priest*, because he made atonement for transgressors; and an *Advocate*, because he ever liveth to make intercession. All these, and similar appellations, denote his healing power. By Malachi, ch. 4 : 2, he is called the “Sun of righteousness,” etc. — In Rev. 22 : 2, he is called the “Tree of life, whose fruits were for the healing of the nations.” — Observe,

1st. *The Character of the Physician.* To ascertain this is of the

utmost importance. We read of "Physicians of no value," Job 13 : 6, and confidence cannot be placed in them.

(1.) Christ was *Divinely authorized and appointed* to this important work. An ordinary physician must first be tried, examined, and proved, before he can possess a diploma to authorize him to practise in the medical department. This gives him a superiority over empirics, quacks, etc., who frequently kill more than they cure. — Christ received his diploma, or commission, from God the Father. "Him hath God the Father sealed." He was tried many ways, and gloriously proved to be eminently qualified to undertake the care and cure of souls. When he commenced his prophetic career, he combined with it the profession of a Divine physician, healing the bodily maladies of men and women, raising the dead, and casting out devils. And when he was asked about his commission, or by what authority he did those things, he immediately produced his diploma, even his Father's seal to his commission. He said, John 5 : 36, 37 ; he made it appear that he was no deceiver. — Isa. 61 : 1-3.

(2.) *His skill is infinite.* He is infinite in wisdom, — "the only wise God." A physician must understand the anatomy of the human body, — the nature of the various diseases to which it is subject. He should also know their various symptoms, and the cause producing them. He must be skilful to prescribe suitable directions, advice, operations, and medicines. — Christ possesses unbounded knowledge. He knows all the faculties of the soul. He knows its state throughout. He understands the cause, the progress, and the precise state of the soul's disease ; whether it be the *fever* of anger, the *dropsy* of covetousness, the *leprosy* of uncleanness, the *lunacy* of ambition, the *palsy* of spiritual sloth, the *stone* of an obdurate heart, the *tympany* of pride, or the *consumption* of unbelief. As a skilful physician understands the constitution of his patient, so Christ knows the inclinations of every soul ; the sins which most easily beset them, Heb. 12 : 1, 2. He knows all its habitual diseases, which may be inveterate and stubborn, and distinguishes them from the weaknesses and infirmities to which the best of men may be subject.

(3.) *His power is infinite.* He can command the disease to depart at his pleasure. He can destroy the works of the devil in the soul. He can calm the rage of human passions, and break the rocky heart in pieces, and bring every thought and desire into obedience to himself. "We are God's workmanship, created unto good works in Christ Jesus." "He worketh in us both to will and do of his own good pleasure."

(4.) He possesses *infinite tenderness and compassion.* "He is touched with the feelings of our infirmities," etc. "He knows our frame," etc.

"His heart is made of tenderness,
His bowels melt with love."

An ordinary physician may, in some dangerous and extreme cases, have the heart of a lion, yet in others, may have great tenderness. With the compassion of a God, Christ treats the wounded conscience, and heals the broken heart. "He will not break the bruised reed." "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." I long to heal you, and make you whole. — When he as-

cended Mount Olivet, and looked down on Jerusalem, who had rejected his healing balm, he wept, and said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," etc.

(5.) His healing is characterized by *patience, and diligent attention*. This must be the case with an ordinary physician, laboring to effect a cure. The eye of the great Physician is ever upon his patients; he goes on with his work till he has effected a cure; he bears with their ingratitude, and the good work which he begins in them he performs unto the day of his second coming.

2d. Observe the *Remedy* which he applies.——It is his precious blood. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." "In that day there shall be a fountain opened," etc., Zech. 13: 1. The healing of the soul is universally ascribed to his blood, the shedding of which satisfied the claims of Divine Justice, magnified the law, and made it honorable. Hence believers are *redeemed* by his blood — reconciled to God by his blood — are forgiven and justified by his blood — sanctified and cleansed from all sin by his blood. See the beautiful statement, Rom. 3: 25, 26, and the graphic language of Isa. 53: 4, etc. It is by the shedding of his blood, his resurrection from the dead, and his intercession at God's right hand, that "he is able to save to the uttermost." Millions of once diseased spirits, but now made whole, and gifted with immortal health in glory, now ascribe their spiritual cure to the blood of the Lamb, Rev. 5: 9, 12; 8: 14.

Observe,

(1.) This *Remedy* is *announced by the ministry of his word*. "We are ambassadors of Christ," etc. That word says, thou art diseased, perishing, dying. Christ is the true physician. Look to him and live. "As Moses lifted up," etc.

(2.) He *applies the Remedy by his Spirit*. By that agency, the diseased sinner is made sensible of his disease, and induced to cry out, "What must I do to be saved?" By the same power he is "quickened," to fly to the refuge — the cross of Christ.

(3.) It is *received by faith*. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "Look unto me," etc., etc. What is faith, but going to the blood of sprinkling, and there submitting the soul to be healed — resting on Christ for pardon? etc., etc.

(4.) It is carried on, or perpetuated in *connection with the Church of Christ*. Though sin may be subdued, etc., yet it will attempt to gain the ascendancy as long as we are in the body. The Church is the *hospital of Grace*, where the Divine Physician dwells, and progressively carries on his saving work. "He hath begun a good work in his people and will perform it to the end." Public Worship, the ministration of the truth, prayer, Christian intercourse, adverse providences, afflictions, etc., are all designed to make Christians healthy in the Divine life.

3d. *The excellency of the Remedy*. Observe briefly,

(1.) It is *universally adapted*. It will do for any people, in any clime, young or old, rich or poor, however vile.

(2.) *It is always available.* "The word is nigh thee," Rom. 10: 8. "He bringeth his salvation near."

(3.) *It is perfectly free.* How expensive the charges of earthly physicians! Some, by curing the body, or attempting to do it, ruin the estate of the patient. — But this remedy is "without money, and without price."

(4.) *It is infallibly efficacious.* Ordinary physicians, after a long and expensive course of medical attendance, are frequently compelled to declare, "I can do no more for this patient." — But when did Christ the Physician fail? He has cured the most inveterate cases. See the specimens of his sovereign cure in his word. See Saul of Tarsus—the Ephesian converts—the saints at Corinth—the dying thief. The immutable physician cannot fail. "He ever liveth," etc.

APPLICATION.

1st. Be thankful for so excellent a Physician.

2d. All must acknowledge their spiritual maladies, and the need they have of his mercy in order to be healed by him.

3d. The most inveterate and dangerous disease the soul can be infected with, is to imagine itself *whole*, when the sting of death, which is sin, has pierced it through in every part, infusing its poison everywhere.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF NOT BEING OFFENDED AT CHRIST.

"And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." — MATT. 11: 6.

A CORDIAL and hearty reception of the Gospel must even be productive of mental peace and satisfaction. — The objector to Christianity, who is ever on the search to find objections by which to oppose it, cannot enjoy that peaceful calm realized by the true Christian. He dwells in uncertainty — his conscience is not at ease — he is bewildered with speculation. — The text beautifully concludes the answer given by Christ to John's disciples. See preceding verses.

I. THE PERSONS WHO ARE OFFENDED AT CHRIST.

The word "offend" means a stumbling-block. The verse might be rendered, "Happy is he to whom I shall not prove a stumbling-block!" Happy is he who shall not take offence at my poverty and lowliness of life, so as to reject me and my doctrine! Happy is he who can, notwithstanding that poverty and obscurity, see the evidence that I am the Messiah, and follow me!

That many should be offended at Christ is intimated by prophecy, Isa. 8: 14, 15; and that he was a stumbling-block to many is affirmed in the New Testament, Luke 2: 34; 1 Cor. 1: 22, 23; 1 Pet. 2: 8.

Many during the personal ministry of Christ were offended at him.

The chief-priests, rulers, etc., Ps. 2 : 1, 2, etc. ; 1 Cor. 2 : 8. Because he did not answer their carnal expectations, as a temporal prince, to emancipate them from the Roman yoke, they rejected him. The Apostles found it so.

Being offended at Christ springs from a *depraved heart*. "The carnal mind," etc. "The natural man receiveth not," etc.

Those persons who are offended at Christ :

1st. *Who deny the authenticity of his word.* As Christianity does not suit their carnal views and appetites, they sweep away the whole Bible. This is done by persons who have never seriously investigated the claims of the Messiah. It may be safely affirmed that ninety-nine persons out of one hundred rejectors of the Gospel have never calmly and dispassionately examined its nature and its claims.

2d. *Those who deny his Divinity——and his incarnation.* These are stated as facts above human comprehension, requiring the exercise of faith, not their solution by a finite mind, which cannot grasp the infinite. Although they believe thousands of mysteries in creation, etc., yet they will admit of no mysteries in theology.

3d. *Those who reject the vicarious sacrifice of Christ.* This subject is stated in the Bible in the clearest and most logical manner; yet it is too humbling for the sinner; and he therefore wishes to establish his own righteousness.

4th. *Those who deny the influences of his Spirit.* They depend upon their own "might," and their own "power," and reject the Spirit.

II. THE THINGS AT WHICH THEY ARE OFFENDED.

1st. *At the meanness of his birth.* Though his birth was honored by the acclamations of angels, by the guiding-star in the heavens, by the gifts and worship of the Magi, etc., yet there was a meanness about it, designed to show his followers how low he stooped, etc., at which the "princes of this world" were offended; and thousands at it are still offended. John 6 : 42.

2d. *The sufferings of his life——and the ignominy of his cross.* He was heard to say, "Foxes," etc.——He died the death of a slave; "Cursed is he who hangeth on a tree."

3d. *At the nature of his doctrines.* These debase man and exalt the Saviour—they expose the nature of the heart—require a man to become as a little child. The pride of the heart rejects this.

4th. *At the sacrifices which his service requires.* Self-denial—taking up the cross—giving up self—"forsaking father and mother," etc., for his sake—the consecration of talent, time, property, etc., to his service.

5th. *At the ordinances which he has appointed.* The ministry—worship—baptism—Lord's supper—prayer.

6th. *At the simplicity and spirituality of the government of his Church.* It is not secular—not by the sword, but by love—love to God, and love to man, "My kingdom is not of this world."

7th. *At the meanness of his followers.* They are not the wise, the honorable, the noble, etc.

III. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THOSE WHO ARE NOT OFFENDED AT CHRIST.

This language refers to persons who have received him. They have been enlightened and taught by the Spirit — they have discovered his glory and love — they have become humble, teachable, and submissive — they cordially approve of and admire Christ — have yielded themselves to him unreservedly by repentance, and faith in his blood — they are not *speculatists*, but *believers* for the salvation of their souls. Hence they are “blessed,”

1st. *With all the privileges of the Gospel.* As pardon and justification, peace, adoption, access to God.

2d. *With the possession of Christian graces* — love, joy, gentleness, etc. — They are spiritual and distinct from the world.

3d. *With Divine guidance and protection*, 1 Pet. 5 : 7.

4th. *With an approving conscience*, Heb. 9 : 14.

5th. *With Divine honors*, 1 Sam. 2 : 30. “If any man serves me,” etc.

6th. *With Eternal Life.*

Thus Christians are blessed. Compare their state with that of persons who are offended at Christ. Are infidels, etc., thus blessed?

APPLICATION.

1st. Believers, rejoice that the Spirit conquered your aversion to Christ.

2d. See the loss and danger of those who stumble. They will be ruined. See Ps. 2 : 9; Matt. 21 : 44.

THE DECAY OF RELIGION LEADING TO PRAYER.

“Help, Lord; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.” — Ps. 12 : 1.

THOSE who love God love his cause. — When that cause prospers, they rejoice; when it declines, they mourn. — When clouds and darkness are round about the Church, it is time to pray. So did David, and so will all true Christians. Circumstances sometimes cause the Church of God to retrograde, over which no human being can have control. Vain is the help of man. “O Lord, revive thy work.” “Help, Lord,” etc.


I. THE AFFECTING STATEMENT. “The godly man ceaseth, and the faithful fail.”

As it was in the days of David, so it is now. The hearts of God’s people are often deeply affected by witnessing spiritual declensions, and the decrease of God’s people. — Observe,

1st. *The character here specified*; for though two characteristics are mentioned, yet both apply to a good man. He is both *godly* and *faithful*.

(1.) *He is godly.* None are so by nature, but *ungodly*. It therefore supposes a change, even regeneration—a new creature—born again—passed from death to life. Having believed in Christ, he is accepted in the Beloved, and accounted as a *child of God*. He bears his image—he resembles him in his moral perfections, being created of God in righteousness, and true holiness. He prays, he labors to be more like him. He hates sin, and follows after holiness. He worships God, and glorifies him. See Titus 2 : 12; 2 Cor. 1 : 12; Heb. 12 : 28.——To be godly is to be a Christian.

(2.) A good man is *faithful*. This term implies truth, sincerity, and fidelity. Christ is called the “faithful Witness,” Rev. 1 : 5; and also the “faithful and true Witness,” Rev. 3 : 14. When the term is applied to men, it implies that they are believers in Christ, Col. 1 : 2; 4 : 9; 1 Pet. 5 : 12. Sometimes the word *faithful* is equivalent to the word *true*, as in 2 Tim. 2 : 2; and then it imports that the fidelity of the persons referred to has been proved, 1 Tim. 3 : 10; Rev. 2 : 13; Acts 16 : 15. It means a Christian in opposition to an infidel, 2 Cor. 6 : 15; 1 Cor. 4 : 17.

 A good man is faithful in all his *commercial transactions*.

Faithful to his *profession*, adhering to the principles of the Gospel, and laboring, through grace, to be faithful to death.

Faithful to his *trusts*; he has duties to perform, offices to fill, talents to employ; authority is a trust; riches are a trust; time is a jewel.

Faithful to his *promises*.

Faithful in his *friendship*.

Such a character is strikingly portrayed in Ps. 15. Such men are the salt of the earth—the seed of the kingdom.

2d. *The defection or scarcity of this character*; “they cease, they fail.”

The whole Psalm, and other Scriptures, confirmed by observation, intimate that the Redeemer's flock is only a little flock—that in this world the goats are more numerous than the sheep—the chaff more abundant than the real grain—the dross exceeds in quantity the pure gold. Happy are they who are a part of God's peculiar people, his royal priesthood, his holy nation, his chosen generation!

The language of the text implies that the Christian profession is to possess *distinct prominence*, which will require much of the operation of God's grace and Spirit to cause the light to shine.——Many shrink from this.——Observe,

(1.) That godly and faithful men *cease and fail by reason of death*. “The fathers, where are they, and the prophets, do they live forever?” The visitations of death are frequently mysterious. Often the most brilliant in genius, the most lofty in talent, the most pious in heart and life, and the most useful in the Church and the world, are cut down, while mere cumberers of the ground are spared. How affecting the death of a minister in the meridian of life and usefulness—or the death of an influential Christian—or the death of a pious parent! etc. etc. Then is the time to pray, “Help, Lord,” etc.

(2.) The *profession of some is only transient*; they soon *cease and fail*. Some improper motive, some peculiar excitement, may have impelled them——they have thrown off their outward sins, but their hearts have been unchanged—they have entered the Church, and excited the hopes of God's people in reference to them. But their goodness, etc., Hosea 6 : 4. They are like the stony-ground hearers, or the seed that fell among thorns, Matt. 13 : 5-7.—The world allures thousands, and kills the vitality of their religion. Judas, an Apostle, betrayed his Master, from the love of filthy lucre, and Demas, an acceptable preacher and companion of Paul, abandoned his profession, having loved the present world. "Howl, ye fir-trees, when the cedars are fallen," Zech. 11 : 2. "Help, Lord, for the godly ceaseth," etc.


(3.) Some cease or fail by the *exposure of their real characters*, being at first only dissemblers. These unite with God's people, perhaps to promote their secular interest, or to gain the favor of some creature, or to gratify some motive of ambition. When they are gratified—when their excitement is expended, they have nothing more to look for—they tire—they *cease*—they *fail*. Like Simon Magus they are detected. Of such characters, John speaks, 1 John 2 : 19-20. "Help, Lord," etc.

(4.) The *profession of some is ineffective*. It is merely professional. They are trees without fruit—wells without water. They talk much—they pretend much—they are very fastidious—and very censorious; but in the vineyard of Christ, they *cease*, they *fail*; they *pray not*, they *work not*, they *give not*. They have the form of godliness, but where is the power? they are but withered branches; and well may the Church say, "Help, Lord," etc.

(5.) Some fail by *endeavoring to unite the world and religion*; maintaining a good moral character, but are destitute of Christian experience. But this will not do. "Be not conformed to this world," etc. When this worldly spirit creeps into the Church—when its arrangements are secularized—when men, on account of their wealth and worldly influence, are made prominent there, and respected more than the pious poor in the Church, then may the prayer be uttered, "Help, Lord," etc.

(6.) Some cease and fail from the Church by *falling into temptation* of various kinds, and disgrace their profession. They fall through intemperance, etc. etc. "Help, Lord," etc.

(7.) Some cease and fail *through the influence of error*, and the *enemies of Christianity*. These frequently attempt to beguile the unwary. Never was there a time like the present, when Atheism and Infidelity appeared so determined, if possible, to annihilate the Christian religion. Behold their attempts. In factories, and other places of occupation, there is an incessant attempt to instil into the minds of the young, principles inimical to Christianity, as well as to draw professors from their steadfastness. Some have already split upon the rocks of Atheism—some have stranded on the quicksands of Infidelity. "Help, Lord," etc.

 Some who have swerved from the truth have become the most zealous abettors of error, and the most bitter opponents of evangelical religion. The knowledge they acquired under Christianity they have turned to a wicked purpose.

II. THE CONDUCT OF THE PSALMIST IN CONSEQUENCE. He prayed, "Help, Lord," etc.

1st. He was deeply affected with this state of things, and so should every Christian be.

2d. He felt his own weakness, and inefficiency to remedy it. So should every Christian now.

2d. He acknowledged God as the only helper. He looked off from human means to the right source, the eternal God as his refuge. God can and will help those who do not cease or fail.

(1.) By comforting their minds by his Holy Spirit, and the application of his promises to their souls.

(2.) By establishing their minds in the principles of the Gospel, so that they shall be steadfast, unmovable, etc.

(3.) By crowning their efforts with success — blessing the preaching of his word, etc. etc. etc.

Thus he can make up the breaches and the defection, which death, and the world, and Satan, have made.

(4.) The Psalmist prayed fervently, and so let the Church now. God's work must prosper — his cause must spread. Death cannot entomb the Bible — infidelity cannot stop the progress of truth — that truth which has lived amidst the racks, and gibbets, and fires of martyrdom, etc. — Though the fathers and the prophets die, another race, more numerous and effective, shall serve him. "Instead of the Fathers," etc. The mantle of Elijah, and a double portion of his spirit, shall fall upon Elisha. Therefore be not faithless, but believing.

APPLICATION.

1st. Am I ceasing or failing in the Lord's work?

2d. Let those who have failed be induced to return.

3d. Woe to those who have made shipwreck of their faith!

THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE OF FAITH.

"Now the just shall live by faith." — *HEB. 10:38.*

THE preceding verses allude to the sufferings of the primitive Christians. These would have been overwhelming had they been destitute of faith — that faith which indicated to their souls that they had "in heaven a better and more enduring substance," *v. 34*; that faith which anticipated the approach of their Lord to take them home, and free them from all their trials, *v. 37*. — The text is a quotation from *Hab. 2:3, 4*. It implies that the righteous should *live by continued confidence in God*. A persevering confidence, or belief in the Lord, will preserve the soul amidst all the trials and calamities to which we are exposed.

I. THE CHARACTER MENTIONED. "The Just." This is not their

state legally, for, says the Apostle, Rom. 3 : 10. Nevertheless, all believers are said to be just or righteous.

1st. *As found in Christ*, who is the end of the law, etc. Rom. 10 : 4. This is the contrivance of Infinite Wisdom, and of rich, free, and sovereign grace, and worthy of God : "That by one man's obedience," etc. Rom. 5 : 19. Man cannot be justified by works ; but he can by faith in the sacrifice of Christ. — Thus the sinner is accounted and treated as innocent—free from all law charges, and made a child of God, etc. Rom 8 : 1, etc.

2d. They are righteous or just *as conformed to Christ* ; 2 Cor. 5 : 17 ; Rom. 6 : 6 ; Eph. 4 : 22 ; Col. 3 : 9, 10. ~~Re~~ Regeneration by the Spirit has effected this.

3d. *They are habitually or practically just*. Their faith produces good works ; they are honest, upright, abhor evil, and cleave to that which is good. James 2 : 17, 18.

II. THAT THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH. Observe,

This faith is *saving faith* wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God, by which a man receives Christ as he is offered in the Gospel, to be his prophet, priest, and king, and by which he relies upon him alone for sanctification, and all the blessings of salvation. Rom. 5 : 1, etc. It is called "the faith through which we are saved ;" Eph. 2 : 8. — It is a "faith which works by love." Gal. 5 : 6. It "purifies the heart." Acts 15 : 9.

"The just shall live by faith." Paul gives a beautiful illustration of this from his own experience. See Gal. 2 : 20. The believer was once dead to spiritual objects ; they did no more affect him than natural objects can impress a dead body. But as these objects now impress him, interest him, and excite in him hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, it is an evidence that he lives. He breathes prayer and praise ; he feels the pulse of sacred passions ; he has spiritual appetites, hungering and thirsting after righteousness. He is *alive*, for he walks and runs, and fights, and works ; and, though these may be imperfectly performed, they prove that *he lives*. — He is not a mere *machine*, but has "life in himself." Not a mere *picture*, but a vital Christian. Not a mere *statue*, but a "lively stone." 1 Pet. 2 : 5.

"The just shall live by faith."

1st. Because by faith they are *united to Christ*, and *derive from him all needful influence*. Refer to John 15 : 1, 2, etc. Christ is the Head, and his people are the members. — Faith is the spiritual nerve which connects every living member with its living head. "Without me ye can do nothing."

2d. *Because faith anticipates the glories of heaven*, preparatory to which the Christian contest is carried on. Not that contest can merit heaven ; but God has ordained conflict, and graciously promised to sanctify it as a process to ripen the soul for heaven. Hence we are called to deny ourselves—to live soberly, etc.,—to sacrifice earthly comforts, liberty, life ; and all this for blessings of which we know nothing through the medium of our senses. We *see not* the God we *serve*—we *see not* the Saviour whose name we bear—etc. etc. But faith

believes in a God everywhere present, etc. etc. Faith believes that "God so loved the world," etc. Faith believes in the rewards of grace promised to all true Christians.

3d. By faith the just *overcome temptation*. It overcomes the *world*, believing and hoping for a better; it overcomes *persecution*, believing that "blessed are they," etc. Matt. 5: 10; it overcomes *Satan*, resisting him steadfast in the faith; it overcomes the *flesh*, believing the promise, "My grace," etc.

4th. They live by faith in the *darkest seasons*. In poverty, embarrassment, in want, Hab. 3: 17; in domestic troubles; in affliction; under bereavements, etc. Then faith says, "All things shall work," etc.

5th. They live a *holy and pleasant life*, because *faith brings into exercise all other Christian graces*. It is the root of them all. *Hope* could not exist without faith — nor *love*, which produces *gratitude*, and *obedience*. Faith produces too, *holy fear*, *prayer*, and *watchfulness*. "Our communion is with the Father," etc.

6th. By faith they live in *constant expectation of heaven*. 2 Cor. 4: 18; 5: 1, etc. etc. It is the rest to which they travel — the goal to which they run — the kingdom for which they contend — the port of unspeakable bliss to which they voyage. Faith often brings heaven to view. By it they "see the King in his beauty, and the land that is afar off."

APPLICATION.

1st. See the distinguishing happiness of the just.

2d. See the reason of many giving up their profession. They have no real faith — no real life.

3d. Pray for an increase of faith.

THE CHARACTER AND PRIVILEGE OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

"But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice; let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them; let them also that love thy name, be joyful in thee." — Ps. 5: 11.

In this Psalm we may see the nature of true religion. It evidently implies the acknowledgment of God as the object of spiritual devotion, and constant access to him, by prayer for help in every time of need, ver. 1-3. It is this which distinguishes the righteous from the wicked both in character and privilege, ver. 5-10. While righteousness will exalt its possessor, leading to glory, honor, and immortality, wickedness will debase and ruin its perpetrator, leading to tribulation and anguish of soul forever, ver. 10 contrasted with 11, 12. According to the Hebrew, the expression, "Destroy thou them," ver. 10, should have been translated in the *future tense*, "Thou shalt destroy them, O God; they shall fall," etc. —

I. THE CHARACTER OF THE RIGHTEOUS. They "*trust in God, and love his name.*"

1st. *They trust in God.* This implies

(1.) *That God has engaged to be the object of their trust.* The numerous promises he has made prove this. "Fear thou not, for I am with thee," etc. "Call upon me in the day of trouble," etc. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower," etc., with numerous other promises. — It is proved also by the experience of his people, who have ever found him to be their helper and refuge. See Ps. 46 and Ps. 91. "My God shall supply all your need," etc.

(2.) It implies a *deep conviction of their need and helplessness.* "Without me ye can do nothing." Rom. 7: 18. They cannot conquer their spiritual foes — nor perform spiritual duties aright without Divine aid. "Who is sufficient for these things?"

(3.) *The renunciation of all other objects of trust.* They trust no longer in man — nor worldly possessions; they do not make gold their hope, and say to the fine gold, thou art my confidence. They trust not in their own strength, wisdom, and self-righteousness. All these are renounced as refuges of lies, as physicians of no value.

(4.) *Trusting in God has a reference to Christ.* He is the mediator between God and man — the way to the Father. "No man cometh unto the Father except by me." "He ever liveth to make intercession for them." Feeling their need and helplessness, they, when looking to God for help, make mention of Christ's name, and of his name only. The great intercessor takes them by the hand, and presents them and their wants to his Father, and for them pleads his blood.

To *trust in God* is firmly to expect what he has promised to do for us in time and eternity. Ps. 62: 8. It is to believe—to have faith—to confide, as the Jailor, Acts 16: 31, 34, as all true Christians have done, Eph. 1: 22, 13.

Hence they trust in God for the saving of their souls, and for the enjoyment of all the blessings of the Gospel, — for conquest over all their enemies, — for support in and deliverance from all their troubles, — for the sanction of all their trials, — for the guidance and interpositions of his gracious providence, — and for eternal life.

~~Now~~ This trusting is intimately connected with prayer—a direct believing application to God for blessings required.

(5.) Their trust in God is *constant*, Gal. 2: 20. They are encouraged to trust in him, from his liberality, Rom. 8: 32; Ps. 84: 11; his ability, James 1: 17; his relationship, Ps. 103: 13; his promise, Isa. 33: 16; the experience of his people in all ages, Ps. 22: 4, 5, etc. etc.

2d. *They love his Name.* "Let them also that love thy name." The term "thy name," denotes God himself, his nature as discovered to us in all his glorious perfections, especially his power and goodness to protect and save them that trust in him. In this sense, the name of God, or Jehovah, is frequently used in the Scriptures. Ps. 20: 1, 5, 7. In the law and the prophets, it denotes the Divine nature and perfections, as revealed in creation,

providence, and redemption. Ps. 8: 1, 9; 9: 10; Ex. 33: 19; 34: 5, 7. In the New Testament, the term is much the same; John 17: 6; Acts 8: 12; 5: 41; 26: 9; 9: 15. See also Matt. 28: 19; Rev. 2: 13; 3: 8.

To love God is to delight in him, highly esteem him, and earnestly desire to enjoy his favor, to be like him, and to serve him acceptably. Observe,—

(1.) They love him *because he first loved them*. 1 John 4: 19. They love him as their Saviour, their great Deliverer, their Ransomer, their Father, their Shepherd, and their King. 1 Pet. 1: 8.

(2.) They love him *sincerely*. Without dissimulation. Not merely professionally, but really, from the heart. The love of God is shed abroad in the heart. Rom. 5: 5. The love of Christ constraineth them. 2 Cor. 5: 14.

(3.) They love him *supremely*. "He that loveth father and mother, etc., more than me, is not worthy of me." They forsake all to follow him. They deny themselves, and make sacrifices for his sake. "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" Ps. 73: 25.

(4.) They love him *practically*. Faith works by love. James 2: 14-18. They love the brethren. 1 John 4: 20, 21. They love his house; his ordinances; his word; his commandments. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." "And this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous."

II. THE PRIVILEGES OF THE RIGHTEOUS. "They shall rejoice, shout aloud for joy, and be joyful."

1st. The joy itself.

This joy springs from the hope of mercy through the atonement; it is the effect of the truth believed with the heart, through the enlightening influences of the Spirit, and therefore termed joy in the Holy Spirit. Rom. 14: 17. Hence the Eunuch, Acts 8: 39. The first disciples were filled with joy, immediately on their believing, Acts 13: 52; and this joy kept pace with the increase of their faith and hope, however unpropitious their worldly circumstances, until they were brought to "rejoice with joy unspeakable." 1 Pet. 1: 8; Rom. 5: 1. Hence then observe,—

(1.) They have *great cause for joy*. Christ has died for them; they are pardoned—justified from all condemnation; they are adopted into God's family; have access to him; an interest in all the promises—heirs of eternal life. "All things are yours." 1 Cor. 3: 21, 23.

(2.) Their joy is *pure*. Its source is holy; it rejoices in holy things; it arises from holy privileges and duties, and from holy prospects. It is not like the joy of the wicked, which is empty, and connected with sin. Prov. 16: 21.

(3.) It is *satisfying*. Worldly joys leave a sting behind. Eccle. 2: 10, 11; 11: 9. When earthly enjoyments are taken from the ungodly, they have nothing left; their mirth is ceased, for their all is gone; and they say with Micah, "Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more?" But in loss of all, Christians can rejoice in their God.

Why? Because when they are full, they can enjoy God in all; when empty and impoverished, they enjoy all in God.

(4.) *This joy is triumphant.* They "shout for joy." They frequently triumph over the flesh, the world, and Satan, and they shout for joy. They have often clear evidences of their acceptance with God, and know in whom they have believed, etc., then they shout for joy. They have often bright views of their heavenly home, and feel their salvation nearer than when they believed. They see the heavenly Jerusalem — its golden streets, its waving palms, the conquering throng, its deathless harps, etc. It is then they shout for joy.

(5.) *Their joy is constant.* "Ever shout;" "joyful;" implying an habitual frame. "Your joy no man taketh from you."

2d. The *particular cause* of this joy is specified. "Because thou defendest them."

(1.) *He defends them by his providence.* Everything contrived against them God sees. Ps. 121: 4. A sparrow cannot fall, etc. Providence defends them, but not the wicked. See Prov. 10: 3; Isa. 3: 10. Noah was preserved. Gen. 6: 8, 9; Lot also. Gen. 19: 22. Sodom would have been spared for ten, etc. Gen. 18: 32. He preserved the three Hebrew children. Dan. 3; Moses, Ex. 2; Daniel, Joseph in the pit, Paul in many perils, 2 Cor. 11, and Peter in prison, Acts 12.

(2.) *He defends by his power.* Dan. 3: 17; John 10: 28, 29; 2 Sam. 22: 2, 3. His hand is omnipotent, he spans the heavens, etc. Isa. 40: 12. On this Almighty Arm believers trust. Ps. 27: 1.

(3.) *He defends them by his angels.* They guarded Elisha. 2 Kings 6: 17; Lot, Peter. They encamp, Ps. 34: 7, and are ministering spirits, Heb. 1: 14.

God can strike terror into their enemies, so that they dare not molest them. Gen. 35: 5. Jacob prayed to be delivered from Esau. Gen. 32: 11, and he was, Gen. 33: 1. He can curse the very weapons of the wicked, and frustrate all their designs. See Isa. 54: 16, 17.

THE CHRISTIAN MADE GLAD.

"For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands." — Ps. 92: 4.

"THE works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." — A prospect of creation, though blighted by sin, in the vernal season, is productive of much joy. But how glad and triumphant is the regenerate soul, by realizing the "work of God's hand," by which he has been created anew in Christ Jesus! If we are delighted with this sinful world, there is more cause to be delighted with the work of Christ for the soul, by which it receives a title and a meetness for that glorious paradise wherein dwell righteousness and immortality. — What are we to think of the palace, since even the prison is not without its charms!

I. AN INTERESTING SUBJECT: "*Thy work.*"

All that is visible to us in God's creation, and that is invisible throughout his infinite domain, is the work of Jehovah's hand. He made all, he governs all. — But more particularly,

1st. It is the work of God *to redeem the soul*. Sin has enslaved it, placed it under condemnation, and exposed it to the inflictions of Divine Justice. Sin is an infinite evil, and requires the interposition of an infinite Redeemer. Hence John 3 : 16; Ps. 89 : 19; Rom. 8 : 3; 5 : 6-8. — This was a work of stupendous grace—of rich and unparalleled love!

2d. It is God's work *to regenerate the soul*. Sin has defiled it, crushed it, ruined it. "It is deceitful above all things," etc. — But God quickens it, Eph. 2 : 1; purifies it, deadens it to sin, fills it with holy desire, and makes all things new, 2 Cor. 5 : 17. This is peculiarly the work of God, John 1 : 13; 1 Pet. 1 : 23.

3d. It is God's work *to receive the soul to favors and privileges lost by sin*. See this strikingly stated in Eph. 2 : 11-13, 19-22. He receives them by adoption into his family—to communion with himself, and to all the ordinances of his house. What condescension is this!

4th. It is the work of God *to comfort the soul*. Isa. 40 : 1, 2; 2 Cor. 1 : 3, 4. He comforts them with his word—he makes them glad with his promises. Ps. 119 : 50; Rom. 15 : 4. He comforts by his Spirit. Acts 9 : 31.

5th. It is the work of God *to protect and save his people to the end*. "I will never leave," etc. He will keep them from falling. Rom. 8 : 31, etc.

6th. It is the work of God *to glorify the soul*. He will raise both body and soul to heaven, and forever glorify them there. John 14 : 2, 3; 17 : 24.

II. AN INTERESTING STATEMENT: "Thou hast made me glad through thy work."

This gladness is the delight and satisfaction of the soul, arising from union with God in Christ, as the greatest and highest good, with an actual rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.

This language exhibits an *amazing change*. Formerly, sin produced sadness, a fearful looking for of judgment; but now he is "glad." His sorrow is turned into joy. The black cloud of despair is rolled away, and the Sun of Righteousness has risen upon him with healing and life-giving power.

1st. *This gladness is Divine*. "Thou hast made me glad." Nothing in this world can really gladden. Earthly joys are transitory. The only true source of substantial joy is God. "Thou," etc. Ps. 40 : 1-3. This joy is created by thee.

2d. *It is the gladness of experience*. Gladness arising from experiencing God's quickening, saving, sanctifying, and comforting power. — Thou hast gladdened my soul by opening mine eyes—by exciting me to cry for mercy; thou madest me glad at the cross, where I received pardon for my every crime, and justification from all condemnation. I

am born again. I am adopted. I have a good hope through grace. I am more glad than a ransomed captive, a discharged debtor, or a reprieved criminal, Ps. 4 : 7.

8d. *It is social joy.* Thou hast made me glad with thy church. I tell to my brethren what thou hast done for my soul, and they are "sharers in, or partakers of my joy." Mal. 3 : 16.

4th. It is the *gladness of faith and hope.* Christians have peace and joy through believing. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for," etc. They are glad when their faith assures them that in heaven they have a more enduring substance, etc. Hope constantly anticipates it, expects it, etc. Rom. 15 : 4; Heb. 6 : 16-19; Titus 1 : 2; 2 : 13.

III. A JUDICIOUS RESOLUTION. "*I will triumph in the works of thy hands.*"

To triumph means to rejoice and shout on account of victory over enemies. God triumphs over his enemies. Ex. 15 : 1, 21. So Christ, Col. 2 : 15. So believers always triumph in Christ amidst weakness, sinfulness, and trouble. 2 Cor. 2 : 14; Ps. 106 : 47.

To triumph implies,

1st. *Grateful acknowledgment of Divine obligation.* The "works of his hands," in all their diversified and gracious character, are for the benefit of his Church—the salvation of his people.——Hence the Christian is thankful. 1 Pet. 1 : 3. His praise is fervent and triumphant. See Isa. 12 : 1-3.

2. *Intimate acquaintance and rapturous satisfaction with the works of his hands.* Hence Paul, 1 Cor. 2 : 2; Gal. 6 : 14. He glories in Christ's person—in Christ's life—in Christ's works, in his death, etc., etc.

8d. The *expectancy of an ultimate and complete triumph* through the "works of his hands." His power will carry on the work he has begun. I will triumph over sin, and Satan, and men, and death, and hell, through the making bare of thy holy arm on the cross. "More than conquerors."

4th. *A determination to proclaim* "the works of his hands" to others—to spread the Gospel—to make others acquainted with his salvation, Ps. 34 : 2. If I cannot devote myself to its proclamation, I will give my prayers, my contributions, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified.——"I will triumph in the works of thy hands."

THE SINNER'S RUIN AND RECOVERY.

"For thus saith the Lord, Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money." — Isa. 62 : 3.

In verses 1, 2, the state of the Jews in Babylon is compared to that of a female captive sleeping in the dust, and in that degraded condition bound by her enemies. But Jehovah appears as her triumphant Deliverer. The Deliverance of Israel from Babylonish captivity made a deep impression on the mind of the prophet; and his attention was immediately turned to that great salvation, of which this from Babylon was but a figure. — The whole chapter is replete with interest, pointing to man's state of spiritual captivity, and his deliverance by the intervention of the Son of God, whose countenance was "marred more than any man's," etc., (v. 15) and who shed his precious blood that man might reign in bliss forever.

I. THE SOLEMN STATEMENT. "*Ye have sold yourselves for nought.*"

The fact itself is undeniable; for had not man been in a state of captivity, there would have been no necessity for redemption from it.

Man's primeval state was one of perfect happiness and freedom. Then he bore the image of God, and the robe of righteousness, and not the habiliments of a slave. Then he enjoyed uninterrupted communion with his Maker. To serve and love God was his natural element, and the source of his exquisite bliss. Then he was no slave to Satan, the great enthraller of souls; nor to his lusts, nor to the world. Then he was spiritually minded, which was life and peace. — But, alas! this happiness was interrupted; this freedom was destroyed, by man's voluntary yielding himself to the temptations of the great Adversary. (See this described in Gen. 3.)

This captivity is *universal*. "By one man sin entered the world," etc. The conscience of every man must bear witness that he is not as he ought to be; in fact, that he has fallen into the snare of the Evil One — that the mainspring of moral action is broken — that he is alienated from the life of God, etc. Observe,

1st. That the *Being* to whom sinners have sold themselves is *Satan*. He is an enemy to God and man. His great business is to enslave souls. He is the "Spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." All sinners have been enticed by him, and they are "his servants." They have fallen into "his snares." 2 Tim. 2 : 26. See the case of Ananias, Acts 5 : 3; also, the case of Judas, Luke 22 : 3. See 2 Tim. 2 : 26; Eph. 2 : 1, 2.

2d. That which is sold to Satan is *inestimably precious*. "*Ye have sold yourselves.*" It is the soul of man with all its noble powers. The soul is the offspring of God; formed for God and eternity. It is capable of inconceivable happiness, and of yielding a revenue of glory to God. It is the most precious gem in creation.

The "fine linen of Egypt," the "gold of Sheba," and the topaz of Ethiopia," are but dust on the balance compared with the soul of man. Its precious worth is described by Christ, Mark 8 : 36, 37. — Yet this precious jewel the sinner has undervalued — and sold himself to the great Deceiver. Isa. 50 : 1.

3d. The *purpose* for which the sinner has sold himself. Like Ahab to work wickedness. To be the emissary of Satan ; and to execute his ungodly deeds. The powers of the mind, and the members of the body, become the inventors and perpetrators of evil. — The great object of the sinner's anxiety, and that for which he has surrendered his soul, is to gratify his sensual appetites. Hence he loves the world—the creature—evil habits, etc. Sinners are called the servants of sin, and are said to "yield their members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity." Rom. 6 : 17, 19.

4th. The *miserable price* for which the sinner has sold himself. "For nought." A sinner may say like Solomon, Eccle. 2 : 11. The sinner may be addressed with Rom. 6 : 21. He "spends his money for that which is not bread," Isa. 55 : 2. He "sows the wind," etc. Hosea, 8 : 7. This language implies,

(1.) *Deception*. Satan told our first parents that they should "be as Gods," when his design was to degrade them "below the beasts that perish." Hence the "deceitfulness of sin," which attracts by flattery, and destroys by delusion. The sinner is *deceived*. He expects a *great price*, but he gets *nought*. Sin comes to him with fascinating smiles, but hides the cloven foot ; it presents the gilded bait, but conceals the hook ; it promises liberty and gratification, but this is only to favor its inroads ; when once admitted, it binds the soul in chains, and dooms it to constant misery. It promises largely, but how does it perform ? See Job 20 : 12-14. — The language may be regarded

(2.) As a *correct estimate* of such conduct. "For nought." It is really so. Nothing has been gained by it. Sinner, has sin promoted thy welfare ? What has it done for thy body, for thy property, for thy reputation, for thy family, and for thy precious soul ? What benefit hast thou gained ? What happiness hast thou realized ? What has intoxication done for the drunkard, lust for the sensualist, extravagance for the profligate, oaths for the profane, etc., etc. ? Thou hast gained nothing, and worse than nothing. What does thy conscience say ? Frequently hast thou returned from the commission of sin, and thy conscience has said, "And is this all ?" And if this is pleasure, how short-lived, how worthless, how mean and degrading !

(3.) It implies *immense loss and positive evil*. The loss of the Divine regard — of precious time — precious privileges — and a prospective loss of Christ, and of the soul. Thou hast sold thyself for nought, and procured for thyself a fearful looking for of judgment, etc. Thou hast made a bad bargain — taken a miserable price for thy immortal soul, even captivity to sin and Satan, and the result of that bad bargain must be painful disappointment, embarrassment, ruin, and death. "The soul that sinneth shall die." "The wages of sin is death." "Sin when

it is finished bringeth forth death." This is positive evil. The curse of the law will fall upon all sinners, if they repent not.

II. A JOYFUL PROMISE: "And ye shall be redeemed without money."

1st. This redemption *could not be effected by human means*. Sin has not only brought man into a state of captivity, but reduced him to a state of weakness and great poverty. He cannot break his fetters; he cannot pay the price of his ransom. Nought that the whole universe could offer would be accepted as a price of it; the cattle upon a thousand hills would have bled, the gold of a thousand treasuries would have been piled up in vain. See Micah 6: 6, 7. Illustrate by a reference to Isa. 55: 1, 2; Luke 7: 42. — When we hear it said, "Other foundation," etc. "There is none other name," etc.; it for ever excludes all human attempts to liberate from spiritual captivity.

2d. Nor is this redemption provided *by the Law* which the sinner has transgressed. It is not according to the ordinary course of *distributive justice*, but an extraordinary expedient devised by the great Lawgiver of the world. — The Law did not provide any commutation of persons, but required that the soul that sinned should die: and we all must have died the death, if the Law had taken its course. — The provision for human redemption must, therefore, be all of grace. John 3: 16.

3d. It must be effected in a way that will *secure the honor of the Divine Law*, as well as the salvation of the sinner. — There is redemption by price, and redemption by power, and each is suited to our state. — Where the dominion over us is *usurped*, no peace is to be made with the enemy, nor price offered for deliverance, but power must be opposed to power. See Gen. 14: 14-16. — But where the power to hold in captivity is *just*, deliverance must be effected by price, or appeasement made. See Gen. 44: 32, 33; Philem. 18. — Our obligation to God's law is just, and our liability to its curse is equally so; no violence therefore can be offered to the Divine government; but satisfaction must be made to offended justice by him who becomes our ransom. — Hence originated the sacrifices under the law, which continually pointed to the Redeemer's atonement.

4th. The redemption of man was *effected by Christ at a great price*. "Ye shall be redeemed without money;" that was ineffectual. As the misery to which the sinner was exposed was infinite, so his deliverance required infinite means.

Christ the ransom was Divine, the Son of God with power, the only begotten of the Father, etc. etc. — He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. John 1: 14. Thus constituted, he came into the sinner's place—he was bound as a criminal, that he might be free; he was put to death in the flesh, that he might live and reign forever. 1 Pet. 3: 18. "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold," etc. 1 Pet. 1: 18, 19. "Christ has redeemed us from the curse," etc. Gal. 3: 13. He was made "a curse for us," an outcast from heaven

and earth.——The only immaculate individual that ever lived in the world since the fall of man, was treated as if he had been the only sinner. His soul was made an offering for sin, in such a way as to proclaim to the universe that *sin was condemned in the flesh*. See Isa. 53 : 5, 10 ; Rom. 8 : 3 ; 2 Cor. 5 : 21.——Job complained that his stroke was heavier than his groaning, and Jeremiah that he was the man who had seen affliction. But what were all their sufferings, compared with Christ's agony in the garden, and on the cross?——In sickness, there is no pang ; in destitution, there are no horrors ; in fear, there is no agony ; in remorse, there is no anguish like it ; nor can it be equalled in hell. There every one bears his own burden ; but Christ endured the misery for great multitudes which, etc. The wrath distributed in all these vials was collected into his cup. In hell impatience writhes, and impiety blasphemes ; but in yonder garden, how meek, how resigned is the sufferer ! What painter can represent the expression in that countenance, on which we see the strongest indications of resignation and love Divine, amidst all the traces of agonizing sorrow ? Christ raises his eye in hope to the black cloud, from which God's fury was rushing down, and cries for mercy to those who were showing none. His heart breaks, but his faith is unshaken ; and " My God, my God ! " was the language of Jesus while made a curse for us.

5th. The effect of these sufferings is our redemption from captivity, and deliverance from the curse of the law. Justice was satisfied, and God can be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. In saving sinners, through Christ, God appears as much the friend of righteousness, and the enemy of sin, as if the whole world had been condemned to perdition. Rom. 3 : 24-26.

By *faith*, therefore, in the sacrifice of the Saviour, deliverance may be obtained, and all the blessings promised in the Gospel realized. As an ordinary prisoner goes forth from his dungeon to enjoy his former liberty, privileges, and friendship, so does the spiritual captive quit his prison-house to enjoy the liberty of the sons of God, to share in their privileges, and realize their joys.

APPLICATION.

- 1st. Behold the riches of Divine Grace. " Where sin has abounded," etc.
- 2d. See the happiness and security of believers. Rom. 8 : 32.
- 3d. Let the life of the ransomed be one of praise to their great Deliverer.

HIGH-MINDEDNESS INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

" Be not high-minded, but fear." — Rom. 11 : 20.

HUMILITY and dependence upon God are essential to the Christian character.——The opposite, pride and self-sufficiency, are the traits in the conduct of the unregenerate, and they will lead to shame and

ruin.—By pride and unbelief the Jews fell, and were cut off from the favor of God. The Apostle, in the preceding verses, presents their conduct as a solemn warning to the Church; and in the text gives a most emphatic prohibition: “Be not high-minded, but fear.”

I. THE EVIL TO BE AVOIDED: “*Be not high-minded.*”

The meaning of the text is, do not be elated in the conception of your privileges, so as to produce vain self-confidence, boasting, and presumption; but rather see and feel the necessity of being continually on your guard, lest you should fall through unbelief, and be cast off.—Observe,

1st. Those are high-minded who boast of the dignity and wealth of *their ancestors*, and the excellency of *their birth*, and think themselves, in consequence, superior to others who have no lofty or distinguished lineage to boast of.—How this idea prevails in the minds of the great, the noble! etc.; and even some persons in indigent condition, are high-minded because *honorably descended*.—The Jews said, “We have Abraham,” etc. Matt. 8: 9; John 8: 39.—“Before honor is humility;” and it is the greatest honor to say, Isa. 63: 16; Gal. 3: 7, 9.

2d. Those who have *high opinions of themselves*, and are *fond of human applause*. Even the wicked proclaim their own goodness; they tell us they mean well—that their hearts are good, as if the tree could be good, and the fruit bad; the fountain pure, and the streams defiled. Then they boast of their liberality, etc., though we often find this combined with sensuality, and even made an excuse for it.

Haughtiness of mind characterized the Pharisees of old. They dearly loved human applause. If they fasted, they disfigured their faces, to convince men that they *really* fasted. When they prayed, they stood at the corner of the streets that they might be seen by people coming two ways. When they gave alms, they sounded a trumpet before them. They trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. Just observe one of them, Luke 18: 10–12.—In the days of Solomon, there was a whole generation of such characters, Prov. 30: 12, 13. The Apostle Paul himself was once one of them, Rom. 7: 9; and this spirit infested the Church at Laodicea, Rev. 3: 18.

3d. *This evil sometimes besets Christians themselves*.—Instance Peter when he said, “Though all men,” etc., Matt. 26: 33. Did not presumption lead to the denial of his Lord, and bitter repentance? When the seventy disciples returned from their mission, through the land of Judea, they said, “Lord,” etc, Luke 10: 17–20. They acknowledge the agency to be his, but they were unduly elated at being the instruments.—Christians may talk too much about themselves.—“Let another praise thee, and not thy own lips.”

In the Church this high-mindedness may exhibit itself,

(1.) *In the pride of wealth*, or superior circumstances in life. This may lead to the neglect of the poor of God’s flock.—Wealth, when sanctified, will prove a blessing to the Redeemer’s cause.—Christians are emphatically cautioned not to pay undue respect to the rich. See James 2: 1, etc.

(2.) *In the pride of talent*. If a man have superior knowledge, dis-

cernment, eloquent speech, etc., he is in danger of being puffed up. The voice of commendation may often sound in his ears, and Satan will not fail to insinuate that he is highly gifted, etc. Hence it requires much grace to avoid high-mindedness. See 1 Cor. 8 : 1-2. All gifts come from God, 1 Cor. 12 : 4, etc. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. Though Paul preached successfully, he had nothing to glory of, 1 Cor. 9 : 16; and estimated himself as "nothing," 1 Cor. 12 : 11.

(3.) *In the pride of usefulness.* Here a man is in danger of attributing too much to himself, instead of ascribing the whole of his success to God, who alone can give the increase, 1 Cor. 3 : 6-7. — Therefore, be not like the Pharisees of old, boasting of what you are, of what you do, or of what you give.

II. THE MEANS OF AVOIDING THIS EVIL: "*But fear.*"

This fear implies prudence, vigilance, watchfulness. As if the Apostle had said, "You have seen the effects of pride and unbelief in the case of the Jews; avoid their conduct, and be continually on your guard, lest you also come into the same condemnation." — The fear of the Lord implanted in the heart will produce such watchfulness. Hence fear is represented as a holy affection, or gracious habit produced by Divine power in the heart, Jer. 32 : 40, which causes it to hate and flee from evil, Prov. 8 : 13, 16 : 6.

1st. *Fear the treachery and natural pride of your hearts.* They are depraved, deceitful, and fond of applause. "He that trusteth his own heart is a fool." "Keep thy heart with all diligence," etc. — High-mindedness springs from depravity, and ignorance of that depravity, and from not feeling dependence upon God as the source of all good.

2d. *Fear the awful effects of pride.* It is the forerunner of destruction. It ruined Pharaoh, Haman, Nebuchadnezzar, etc. "Pride goeth before destruction," etc. —

High-mindedness disregards the prudential advice of experience, and falls into those evils which wisdom urges to shun.

High-mindedness induces neglect of the means of grace, etc., etc., by which the soul becomes unfruitful, like dead branches, whose end is to be burned.*

3d. This fear may be *promoted by regarding the patterns of humility* in the Scriptures. The humility of Christ, Phil. 2 : 6, 7. Abraham

* "Pride causeth the professor to neglect studying the Bible and his own heart, and to despise others; this kind of pride is the more dangerous, because it is perhaps the most secret of all sins, and the heart is more deceitful in this matter than in any other. The very nature of this sin is to work self-confidence, and to drive away simplicity and humility; it appears in many shapes undiscerned, and takes occasion to arise even from the exercise of real grace. Spiritual pride causes us to speak of the failings of others in a bitter and severe manner, while we attempt to hide or defend the greatest improprieties in our own conduct." — PRESIDENT EDWARDS.

"Pride is founded on error and self-ignorance. Some are proud of what they are, and some of what they are not. A man may be poor in purse, yet proud in spirit. Pride may account the Gospel foolishness, but the Gospel proves pride to be so. God would rather his people should fare poorly than live proudly. As cankers breed in the sweetest roses, so (through our depravity) pride may arise out of the best duties." — J. MASON.

called himself "dust and ashes." Jacob, Gen. 32 : 9. Job ; "Behold I am vile." Paul ; "I know that in me," etc. "I am less than the least," etc. Humility even characterizes perfected spirits in glory.

"The bird that soars on highest wing,
Builds on the ground her lowly nest;
And she that doth most sweetly sing,
Sings in the shade when all things rest :
In lark and nightingale we see
What honor hath humility !

"The saint that wears heaven's brightest crown,
In deepest adoration bends ;
The weight of glory bends him down
The most when high his soul ascends ;
Nearest the throne itself must be
The footstool of humility !"

4th. As creatures, our *insignificance* should make us humble ; but as *sinners*, we have reason to be still more so. If there be one flower in the garden, there may be a thousand noxious weeds ; and if we possess any degree of goodness, yet there is enough in us to keep us humble. But if this be not sufficient, the Lord will find other means to lay us low. "Lest," etc., 2 Cor. 12 : 7.

5th. *Fervently pray for humbling grace.* God alone can clothe the heart and life with humility.

THE NATURE AND BLESSEDNESS OF CHRIST'S SERVICE.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." — MATT. 11 : 29.

THE text is a direction given, and a promise made to those who come to Christ. None come to him, but those who labor and are heavy laden with the service of sin, and its consequences.——When a sinner throws off the yoke or service of sin, he puts on the yoke of Christ, which, compared with the former, is not only easy, but pleasant. What a vast difference between the yoke of Christ and that of Satan !——Not a command is given—not a duty is enjoined, but what is connected with a promise of gracious reward.

I. THERE IS SOMETHING TO BE BORNE : "*Take my yoke upon you.*"

The word "*yoke*" is sometimes an emblem (1) of *bondage*, Deut. 28 : 48 ; Lev. 26 : 13 ; (2) of the *punishment of sin*, Lam. 1 : 14 ; (3) of *afflictions and crosses*, those useful restraints, which arise from a sense of the duty we owe to God, and the obedience we ought to pay to his laws, Lam. 3 : 27 ; (4) the *doctrines and precepts of Christ*, and the temper, dispositions, and duties which flow from them. This is the meaning of the yoke in the text. It refers to the religion of the Redeemer, and he here calls upon mankind to embrace and obey it.

1st. *It is the yoke of faith.* The assent of the mind to the plan of salvation and the service of Christ. It is actual trust in Christ for the blessings of the Gospel; and the whole of the Christian's life is a life of faith, Gal. 2 : 20.

2d. It is the *yoke of public profession.* The disciples of Christ must profess him openly before the world. Mark 8 : 38.

3d. It is the *yoke of church fellowship*, 2 Cor. 7 : 5. Union with the Church is essential to pleasing God, and to spiritual enjoyment. The promises, privileges, etc., are bestowed upon the *people of God* as members of his church militant.

4th. The *yoke of holy service.* "Go work in my vineyard." A believer is not to be idle. Faith works by love. There is much service to be performed.

5th. It is a *yoke of submission.* A Christian has to meet with persecution, afflictions, and numerous trials. These may discourage him, and cause him to faint. But he must hold fast, and not be moved away from the hope of the Gospel. Like Paul, who said, "Yet none of these things move me." Or like Christ; "Not my will," etc.

6th. It is an *easy yoke*, v. 30. The services that I shall require are easily rendered. They are not burdensome as compared with other yokes. As a master, I am *meek*, etc. Not harsh, overbearing, and oppressive, like the Pharisees, etc., but mild, gentle, and compassionate in my government. My yoke is easy.

(1.) When compared with the *yoke of sin.* Compare my service with the laws which sin imposes on its votaries; the laws of fashion, honor, sensuality; and it will be seen that this yoke is the yoke of freedom, John 8 : 35. "He is a freeman whom the truth maketh free, and all are slaves besides." It is easier to be a Christian than a sinner.

(2.) Compared with the yoke of the law. See Acts 15 : 10. Or compare it with the yoke of Heathenism——or with the yoke of Popery.

(3.) Because *Christ will enable to bear it.* This yoke is lined with love. The Apostle Paul bore this yoke, when he suffered from the "thorn in the flesh," but the yoke was lined with grace, and it became easy to bear, "My grace," etc. "Most gladly," etc., 2 Cor. 12 : 9, 10. "Learn of me," for

II. THERE IS SOMETHING TO BE LEARNED. "*I am meek*," etc.

1st. *Meekness.* This was eminently Christ's personal character.——It may be defined calmness of mind under provocations; it is the fruit of the Spirit, Gal. 5 : 23. It is an ornament, 1 Pet. 3 : 4. See the various exhibitions of it by Christ, and *learn of him.*——Its import in the text is more extensive: "My laws are reasonable and tender; my spirit is mild, gentle, and sympathetic; my government is not harsh and oppressive"——"*Learn of me.*"

2d. *Lowly in heart.* Isa. 42 : 2. This grace adorned the whole of his life; from his birth till his death. He had "no reputation," etc. "Though he should have his disciple without this grace."

(1.) By studying my character.

(2.) By craving the influence of the Spirit.

III. THERE IS SOMETHING TO ENJOY. "Ye shall find rest to your souls."

How rich and sweet a blessing is rest! Even bodily rest is a great blessing, and so is rest from great mental excitement. It is so estimated by the mariner tossed on the tempestuous ocean—to the soldier conflicting and exposed to death on the field of battle—to the weary traveller, and to the toiling laborer, etc. And how desirable is rest to the heavy-laden guilty sinner—to the man who is inquiring after substantial happiness, and to the expectant saint!

You shall find rest to your souls by *throwing off the yoke of Satan*—the world, etc.

You shall find rest in me your Ransomer, your Peace, your King. You shall find rest,

1st. From guilt and condemnation.

2d. From apprehensions of portending wrath—you shall hide in me, and rest safely.

3d. From carnal pursuits, with all their stings and thorns.

4th. From earthly solicitude and anxiety. I will guide you—arrange all your affairs, and cause all things to work together for your good.

5th. Rest with me in the mansions of eternity.

THE SALVATION OF THE SOUL THE OBJECT OF CHRISTIAN ENTERPRISE.


"Shall save a soul from death."—JAMES 5 : 20.

In every enterprise of Christian benevolence, there are three things indispensably requisite: first, a distinct view of the object to be attained; secondly, means and resources equal to the design; and thirdly, motives sufficiently powerful to meet its labors and difficulties. If any of these fail, exertion will be paralyzed; when combined they will procure success.——Christ—the Apostles had—and all real Christians now have these important and necessary supports.

The great object of the Christian enterprise is to save the soul from death! What enterprise can be compared with this?——All others are empty and insignificant.——Consider

I. THE GREAT OBJECT TO BE SAVED; the *soul*.

The existence of the soul was taught by ancient philosophers—and aspirations after immortality exist in every breast—the barbarian, the heathen, as well as the civilized and scientific.

 The existence of the soul has been denied by some. Men

who like not the restraints of revelation; who wish to gratify their carnal appetites, deny its existence, not as the result of argument, etc., etc., but, in the majority of cases, from carnal motives. It is not from really learned men that Christians have anything to apprehend. The opposition generally comes from persons possessing a smattering of scientific knowledge. "A little learning is a dangerous thing." Many of them, if they perform a few chemical operations, turn an electrifying machine, work a galvanic battery, possess a few geological specimens of stones, minerals, etc., and gaze at a few stars, imagine themselves wonderfully clever men. Such persons exalt all science above revelation,—— which they represent as vague and unsatisfactory——they speak of man as mere animated matter, possessing his present organization through some mysterious and undefined power of nature—— that man, when he dies, has no other destiny than that of vegetative productiveness by the decomposition of his body.

What a blind power of nature that must be which kindles in man aspirations after an everlasting existence, and then by death forever extinguishes them! Nor could we acquit the Deity of folly and absurdity had he created us with an intense thirst after immortality during the short term of our existence on earth, and then allow those aspirations to perish with the body at death.

1st. *The soul is immaterial.* It is not matter; it is spirit. *Being* may be distributed into two classes, *matter* and *mind*. The first has great variety and amplitude. The earth, the ocean, the atmosphere, the bodies of men, etc., the starry orbs, belong to *matter*. They are matter, subject to the perception of the human senses.

The *soul* does not, like the body, come under the perception of the five senses. By the sense of touch, we may feel the soft aerial fluid, but we cannot feel the soul; with the ear we may hear the most gentle sounds, but the voice of the soul is too ethereal to be heard by the ear of man; with the eye we can see the lovely delicate colors of the rainbow reflected by the cloud, but no mortal eye has ever seen the soul.—— How do we become acquainted with the soul? It is by *consciousness*. Thus we can observe its faculties, its desires, motives, propensities, and the movement of its powers.

The soul in its nature is *spiritual*—more spiritual than the air we breathe—more spiritual than the entrancing sound of the most enlivening music—more spiritual than the light of heaven. It is spiritual like the nature of angels, like the nature of God. O stupendous power, that united together objects so different as body and spirit—that makes the body the instrument by which the soul acts—that makes it subservient to the soul; the mysterious vehicle of conveying to the soul the loftiest intelligence and the most refined enjoyment!

2d. *The soul possesses intellectual powers*; nor can we set limits to the degree of strength which these powers may reach, nor to the amount of knowledge, which, by their exercise, the soul may ultimately acquire. Even in this world, short as our stay may be in it, and unfavorable as our circumstances are for mental improvement, intellect often arrives at great power, etc. Philosophers have remarked, that the world is

capable of being compressed by the power of Omnipotence within very narrow limits; and yet its nature in no degree changed. It is surprising how capable a small piece of gold is of expansion, so as to be sufficient to cover the surface of an immense edifice.——The soul presents infinitely greater wonders. See Sir Isaac Newton in the cradle, fast asleep, his mind in embryo, unconscious of his existence through the feebleness and imperfection of infancy, then look onward thirty years, and see him traversing the heavens, encompassing with his grasp the solar system; measuring suns and planets, and determining, with the accuracy of mathematical precision, the distances of the stars.——

What may intellect become, what power may its faculties reach, over what fields of thought may it sweep, and what treasures of wisdom and knowledge may it amass, *in heaven*, as its immortal ages advance! in the presence of God, mingling with pure celestial spirits.

3d. The soul has *great moral capabilities*, and is *susceptible of great happiness*. Lapsed and debased by sin, as it now is by nature, it is nevertheless capable of a perfect renovation, and can possess high moral excellence in this world, and in heaven [enlarge].——And it is susceptible of *great happiness* in this world, and *infinite happiness in heaven*.

4th. *The soul is immortal*; it shall never die. Not being matter, it is incapable of decomposition and destruction. God certainly could destroy it, but it is *his will* that it should live forever. Its immortality is inferred from its nature—its immateriality—its intellectual and moral capabilities; its love of existence, its horror of annihilation, and its hopes of immortality, with that secret satisfaction it has in doing right, and its uneasiness in doing wrong, etc. etc.; and particularly from the perpetual progress of the soul in knowledge, science, and virtue. How can it be supposed that that which is capable of such improvement should fall into nothing almost as soon as it is created? The animal creation soon arrive at a point they can never pass. The sparrow builds its nest the same now as it did thousands of years ago.

Some of the wisest sages of antiquity thought the soul immortal. Plato arranged arguments to prove it; but with them it was rather a subject they warmly loved, than one they firmly believed.——But life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel.

The existence and immortality of the soul have been revealed by the Scriptures. Matt. 10 : 28; 25 : 46; Dan. 12 : 2; 2 Tim. 1 : 10; 1 Thess. 4 : 17, 18; John 10 : 28.

5th. The soul therefore must be *the most valuable gem in creation*.——How valuable must that soul be, which shall live when all earthly kingdoms are no more—which shall live when the Pyramids of Egypt are levelled with the ground—when the lofty mountains shall be melted in the general conflagration—when the heavens are rolled together like a scroll; yea, which shall live while the Lord God Omnipotent lives and reigns!

II. THAT THE SOUL IS THE SUBJECT OF SPIRITUAL DEATH HERE, AND EXPOSED TO DEATH ETERNAL.

This death is not the extinction of its being, or the eternal loss of its self-consciousness, as the infidel dreams when, standing amid the ruins of the tomb, he proclaims death an eternal sleep. No! What then is the death of the soul?

1st. *Sin is the cause of death.* "The wages," etc. "By one man," etc. "Sin when it is finished," etc. "The soul that sinneth shall die." It is the *plague* — the *poison* — the *ruin* of the soul.

2d. It implies *the loss of the Divine favor.* "Your iniquities have separated," etc. — loss of Divine communion.

3d. It is *the death of innocence and purity.* Created in the image of God. It has been lost, and man loves sin. The mind is carnal; the heart deceitful, etc.

4th. It is *the death of happiness.* Sin can procure no substantial happiness. Holiness is the only legitimate and fruitful source. "Great peace have they that love thy law," etc. "A conscience void of offence."

5th. *The death or prostration of all its noble powers,* — the death of all usefulness.

6th. *Consignment to eternal condemnation and woe;* a state of unmingled suffering and despair, amidst the torments of mutual recrimination and self-reproach, where the worm dieth not, etc.

III. ITS SALVATION; "shall save a soul from death."

1st. *The soul can be saved.* The plan of salvation has been developed in the mission and death of Jesus Christ — the soul can be renovated by the Spirit, it can be reinstated in the favor of God, etc. etc.

2d. *It can be instrumentally saved.* God has chosen instruments. — The principal of these are

(1.) *The ministry of the word.* "It hath pleased him by the foolishness of preaching to save the world."

(2.) *By the instruction of the rising generation.* These have saved many souls — some from those seminaries have risen to eminent piety and eminent usefulness.

(3.) *By prayer.* This moves the hand that moves all things.

(4.) *By liberality.* "The liberal soul deviseth liberal things." "The earth is the Lord's," etc., and pecuniary contribution is only a return of that which we possess to its original source.

GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF DIVINE GOODNESS.

"The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad." — Ps. 126 : 3.

A DEEP sense of entire dependence upon God as the source of all true enjoyment, will ever pervade the mind of the Christian. — This Psalm is supposed to have been written by Haggai and Zechariah, as

the Syriac supposes, or by Ezra, according to others, and it certainly refers to the close of the Babylonish captivity, when deliverance from it was announced. It is a beautiful composition, and highly descriptive of the circumstances which it represents. [Read and comment on the preceding verses.]

I. A PLEASING STATEMENT: "*The Lord hath done great things.*" This statement implies

1st. *An acknowledgment of the Divine Hand.* "The Lord hath done." Rich was the blessing, even liberty, proclaimed to the Jews; but they acknowledged it was the Lord's doing. "The Lord hath done." God is the fountain of all our mercies, temporal, spiritual, and eternal. Whatever may be the streams, he is the Source; or the instruments to promote his designs, he is the Agent. "Every good and perfect," etc. "All my springs are in thee."

2d. The statement refers to "great things." It is the need of happiness that makes men value it. The Jews had long groaned under captivity, and deliverance to them was a "great thing."

What "great things" God has done for his people! See his gracious dealings strikingly represented in Ps. 103. — He has done great things for us,

(1.) *In redemption.* Remembering us in our low estate, he laid help upon one that was mighty, even Christ Jesus, who came into the world to save sinners.

(2.) *In Conversion.* Enlightening the dark mind, arousing the conscience — leading to the cross as the only source of mercy.

(3.) *In the bestowal of Divine freedom.* Liberty to the spiritual captive—from guilt and condemnation—from the impurity of sin—the love of sin, and the domination of sin.

(4.) *The enjoyment of church fellowship.* Adopted into his family, a partaker in their privileges, joys, etc.

(5.) *By providential interpositions and deliverances.* "The hairs of your head are all numbered." How often does the Divine Shepherd save his sheep in the hour of peril—from the designs of enemies—from affliction—from death! He might have cut me down as a cumberer of the ground.

(6.) *By Spiritual advancement.* Thou art carrying on the good work; the inward man is renewed day by day. Through thy grace, I am ripening for glory. I am voyaging through life, and he steers my bark, and points me to the port of glory. — I have a good hope through grace. — He has prepared for me a crown—a kingdom—an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. — These are "great things."

II. A JOYFUL STATEMENT: "whereof we are glad."

How glad would the captive Jews be when it was announced, "Behold, your redemption draweth nigh!" And the Christian can never forget past mercies, present mercies, and "great things" to come, laid up in heaven for him. — This gladness implies,

1st. *Sensibility.* Sinners are asleep — dead — unmindful of the hand that feeds and sustains them. A believer is a ransomed one, the Spirit

has quickened him——he praises the Fountain of all his mercies.——He constantly takes a retrospective view of God's gracious dealings with him.

2d. *Real enjoyment.* Actual participation. I constantly feel that thou art doing "great things" for me. I daily, hourly enjoy them, and shall I not praise thee?

3d. *It is heartfelt gladness.* "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name."

4th. This gladness is greatly increased by considering the *great unworthiness of the recipient of "great things."* "I am not worthy of the least of thy mercies." "Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee?"

5th. *It is social gladness.* "For us." "*We* are glad." The design of Christian association is to remember the goodness of the Lord, and to be made glad together in holy praise.

6th. Gladness manifests itself by a practical regard for the Divine glory. "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his goodness?" "Show forth the praises of him," etc.

APPLICATION.

1st. Mourn your ingratitude and forgetfulness.

2d. Pray for quickening grace.

3d. Anticipate the time when you shall be made eternally glad.

THE CHURCH COMPARED TO THE MOON.

A METAPHORICAL SKETCH.

"She is fair as the Moon."—Songs 6 : 10.

NOTHING on earth is so precious to the Infinite Mind as his Church.——Her beauty, her glory, etc., are exhibited in the sacred oracles by the most striking figures——amongst which is that of the text. The moon is a secondary planet which attends on the earth, to give light by night. Its beauty and splendor have ever been admired; and its communications of light have ever been appreciated. Hence the comparison in the text.

The moon is called in the Hebrew, *Lebanah*, on account of her whiteness, and bright shining.——The state of the Church is indicated by the text, as all expositors agree.

The Church may be compared to the moon in the following respects:

I. The moon is a beautiful and glorious object, and inspires the beholders of it with admiration.

So the Church of Christ even in this world is a beautiful and glorious object.

The operations of Divine grace have made her fair.——She is

fair when compared with the wicked—fair in the estimation of angels, who behold her with admiration and rapture, Eph. 3. 10; fair in the estimation of Christ, who thus addresses her, "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee." Songs 4: 7: see Isa. 61: 10.

This was not formerly the case; for each member of it was vile and wicked. There was no light, no moral beauty in the soul. But saints are redeemed from spiritual bondage, they are saved from guilt and condemnation—they are regenerated by the Spirit of God—they have now, in some good degree, the fruits of the Spirit, felt in their hearts, and exemplified in their conduct. In their associated capacity, believers are united in the bonds of holy love—they strive together for the faith of the Gospel—they are the salt of the earth; the lights of the world.——What a beautiful object is the Church of God when its members reflect the glory of him who has created them to "good works"!

II. It is stated by the scientific that the moon receives her light from the sun.

So the Church receives all her light and glory from Christ the Sun of Righteousness. The sun gives light, but receives none; the moon both receives light and gives light. So Christ, as God, has light in himself; but as Mediator, he has his light from the Father, to communicate it to his Church, that the Church may give light to the world.

The Church has received from him the light of Divine Revelation—the development and accomplishment of the plan of salvation—all her moral and spiritual beauty—adoption into the family of heaven, and all those glorious privileges flowing from fellowship with himself—also a title to heaven, a meetness for it, and the hope that anticipates it. Ezek. 16: 14.

III. The moon gives light to the world during the night.

So it is by the Church that God sends forth his light and his truth for the benefit of the nations of the earth that sit in darkness and have no light.——And as the moon shall emit its light while time shall last, so the Church of Christ will, instrumentally, diffuse the light of the Gospel, till the kingdoms of this world, etc.

Consider the darkness that exists in the world—of heathenism, of superstition, of Popery, etc. Who has a heart to feel, and a hand to help? None but the Church of God. The "gross darkness" which covers the people, God has determined to disperse—and that by the instrumentality of his Church; by her pastors, her evangelists, her missionaries, and by all the means with which heaven has blessed her.

All the predictions referring to the latter-day glory, are to be fulfilled by the instrumentality of God's Church. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel," etc.

IV. The moon, though very fair and bright, yet has its spots.

So the Church, though pure and holy, has sometimes her spots of

sin. No saint is without blemishes. "If we say we have no sin," etc. 1 John 1: 8. "Pray, therefore, lest ye enter into temptation."

V. The moon has its various aspects; sometimes in the full, sometimes in the wane. Now it shines gloriously, then that glory greatly decreases; yet still it is the same moon, and is not then destitute of the sunbeams, though it may appear so to our sight.

"The Church," says an old divine, "is like the moon, which sometimes shines wholly, being enlightened with the sunbeams, and sometimes deprived of a great part of its light." Now the Church shines most gloriously, and then is so obscured that she hardly appears at all.——The Church has its eclipses, like the moon, and is in darkness for a time.

Sometimes the Church has been eclipsed, or obscured, by *persecution*, and driven by it into the wilderness. Rev. 12: 6. Ecclesiastical history furnishes much information on this subject.——But the Church, like the moon, has always emerged from its obscurity, to shine with its wonted splendor, and to diffuse in the world the light of truth and vital religion.——Sometimes *afflictions* cloud the Church—and *temptations*—and *sin*—and other trials; for believers are often "in heaviness through manifold temptations."

Lastly. The moon is not so bright as the sun; for it derives its light from it; but the period will come when God's Church shall be "CLEAR AS THE SUN;" yea, more pure and bright.

The Church here, in its best state, is but fair as the moon, which shines with a borrowed light, and is subject to changes, and has its spots.——When it is perfected in the kingdom of glory, it will be *clear as the sun*; the Church shall be clothed with the Sun, with Christ the Sun of Righteousness; they shall be as the Sun when he goeth forth in his might. Judges 5: 31. They shall shine in inexpressible glory; and that which *is perfect* shall then come, and there shall be no sin, no darkness, no spots. Isa. 30: 26.

APPLICATION.

1st. Seeing that Christ is the only source of light and glory, pray with David, Psalm 4: 6.

2d. The most eminent Christians have cause for humility—like the moon, they have spots. Apply to Christ for healing. Mal. 4: 2.

3d. Labor to shine as lights of the world, that benighted men may be guided into the way of peace, etc. Matt. 5: 16.

4th. Be comforted notwithstanding your changes, etc. The enemy may as soon change the laws of the moon, as destroy God's Church.

5th. What will be the end of those who would, if possible, pull the moon, the Church, from her orbit, and who despise the Sun, from whom she receives all her brightness and happiness! Job. 5: 14; 2 Pet. 2: 17.

THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST.

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed." — 1 Pet. 2 : 24.

THESE words are full of joyful interest to the Church of God. They contain the sublimest doctrine of the Gospel — the sacrificial death of Christ. To this subject the believer can apply in every moment of spiritual anxiety and embarrassment, and find strong consolation. — Vain are thine accusations, Satan — vain are thy lightnings and thunderings, O Sinai, and vain are your scoffs, O ye children of sin and folly! Christ is mine! He undertook my case of guilt and condemnation; he voluntarily became my surety; he stood in my place, and "bare my sins in his own body on the tree."

The design of Christ in coming into the world, was not merely to become an example of virtue, to die as a martyr for the truth, as some affirm who deny his Divinity and atonement. — What a meagre view is this of Christ's work! — It is impossible to consider, with unbiased mind, the phraseology of the text and context, without considering that the death of Christ was sacrificial. — Lest any should infer from what is stated, ver. 21-23, that Christ's death was designed only for an example of patience under sufferings, the Apostle in the text states a more glorious design; "Who his own self bare," etc. — Contemplate,

I. CHRIST AS A SACRIFICE FOR SIN.

Our redemption was mercifully purposed and devised by Jehovah. "God so loved," etc. It existed in the fathomless depths of Infinite wisdom and love. The Son of God is the great efficient and meritorious author of it. God redeemed us by the righteousness of his Son. "When the fulness of time was come," etc. Gal. 4 : 4, 5. Christ as a Sacrifice,

1st. Was possessed of *the highest dignity and glory*. He was the Son of God, co-equal with the Father, infinitely endeared to him by an ineffable union, and a full participation in all the attributes of a Divine nature, and therefore must be infinitely superior to, and higher than angels; yea, he is the object of angelic adoration, Heb. 1 : 6. He is represented as being one with the Father, "In whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead," etc. He is called the Creator of the universe — the ruler of worlds — the Lord of Providence, and the Judge of all. Heb. 1 : 2, 3.

The works of Christ on earth proved that he was more than man. — Witness, ye blind, whose eyes he opened; ye deaf, etc. etc. Witness, ye stormy winds, which he calmed; and thou raging sea, whose rolling waves he stilled; witness, thou grave, whose barriers he burst, etc. Christ, that he might offer himself as a Sacrifice,

2d. *Became incarnate*, Heb. 10 : 4-8. "The word was made flesh and dwelt among us." John 1 : 14. And this was absolutely neces-

sary, that he might have blood to shed, "for without shedding of blood," etc., and that he might enter into the feelings and trials of his people, weep with those who weep, etc. Hence he was in all things, excepting sin, made like unto his brethren. He was seen and conversed with as a man. He had all the members and faculties of a man; all the appetites and infirmities of a man.—He was God manifest in the flesh. That body which was prepared was the temple of God. As a Sacrifice,

3d. *Christ was perfectly holy*, Heb. 7 : 26. See the argument of Peter in ver. 21, 23. His friends ever beheld him as sinless; his bitterest enemies could never accuse him of one sin; he did always those things which pleased his Father, and the infinitely holy Jehovah announced from the most excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Therefore the death or sacrifice of Christ, was associated with perfect innocence. In every other instance death dips his darts in guilt, before they can inflict a wound, but in the impeccable Saviour he found none. Where then, O where, did he obtain the poison, which rankled in the heart, and caused the death of him who expired on the cross? The only answer that can be given, is *the sin of others*; this it was that furnished the weapon, etc., by which the Lord of Life was slain. "He was wounded for our transgressions." This leads us to observe

4th. That *sin* was the *cause* of the Saviour's sacrifice. "He bare our sins," etc. The sin and guilt of the transgressor separated him from God, and exposed him to the curse.—There is an evil in sin which no language can describe. It is more deadly than the venom of the adder, or scorpion. It is more ruinous than the famine or pestilence. What myriads of souls has it consigned to death! It has insulted the Divine Lawgiver by breaking his laws, despising his authority. It incurs his righteous displeasure, and binds over the impenitent, like a criminal condemned by law, to the day of condign punishment.—Behold, what sin has done! "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself!" The image of God has departed from thy soul—thy affections are sensual—thy will is stubborn—thy heart is callous—thy mind is dark—thy judgment is erroneous—thy whole soul is deformed and defiled, and thou art treasuring up wrath, etc.—Hence the unparalleled nature of God's love in delegating his only begotten One to die for the lost, the ungodly, the perishing.—"Scarcely for a righteous man," etc. Rom. 5 : 7, 8.

From this mass of evil, remember man could not emancipate himself.

5th. That Christ, as a Sacrifice, *stood charged with sins*, as one who had undertaken to put them away by the sacrifice of himself. In fact, he took the sinner's place, Isa. 53 : 6. This undertaking was a voluntary one; "he had power to lay down his life," etc. It is as if he had said, "Let me be bound for the criminal—let me suffer for him—let the sword of justice pierce my heart, and not the sinner's heart—let me drink the bitter cup for him, and suffer the vengeance of eternal fire for him." Yes, and the awful mandate was given, "Awake, O sword," etc.

What a burden he sustained! It was the heaviest burden that ever

was carried — heavier than the weight of universal empire — heavier than holding up the pillars of a boundless creation, — so heavy that its weight was sufficient to have sunk unto endless perdition all the intelligent subjects of the Divine dominion. But, amazing love and power! he “bare our sins!”

He bare them HIS OWN SELF.——This expression is very emphatical, and necessary to show that he verified all the ancient prophecies — to distinguish him from the Levitical priests, who offered the blood of other sacrifices. But Christ shed his own blood, and offered himself as a sacrifice. See Heb. 9 : 11–14, etc.——The language also indicates that no other participated with him in his work. It was done by his *own self*, Isa. 63 : 1–3.

Hence it is said, “He bare our sins *in his own body on the tree.*” He became a surety, but by so acting he subjected himself to degradation, extreme sufferings, and an ignominious death. The death of the cross was *the most dreadful of all others*, both for the *shame* and *pain* of it; and so scandalous, that it was inflicted as the last mark of detestation upon the vilest of people, robbers, and murderers.——The manner in which Christ interposed for man was by suffering. This is corroborated by multitudes of Scriptures. Types and sacrifices prefigured this—prophecies foretold it, and the narrations of the Evangelists confirm it. Himself said, “I have a baptism,” etc. See 1 Pet. 3 : 18. His sufferings were most acute and overwhelming. See Ps. 22 ; Isa. 52 : 14 ; Zech. 13 : 7 ; Mark 14 : 34 ; Luke 22 : 44 ; John 19 : 28.

6th. The Sacrifice of Christ was *effectual*. This is proved by the testimony of his Father. “This is my beloved Son,” etc.——by his resurrection——by his exaltation——by his intercession——and by the determination of Jehovah to crown his undertaking with the possession of universal empire. “He shall see of the travail,” etc. “Ask of me and I will give thee the Heathen,” etc. The death of Christ shook the empire of sin, and insured its final destruction. “The Son of God was manifested,” etc., and the day of vengeance was in his heart when he died for the redemption of his people. The crucifixion, by which the enemy hoped to overwhelm the illustrious Sufferer, became the signal for his defeat; no sooner was the doctrine of the cross proclaimed than Satan fell, like lightning from heaven, and the descent of this fiery meteor shall still be continued with increased velocity, till it reaches the deepest point of perdition.——Briefly consider,

II. THE DESIGN OF CHRIST’S SACRIFICE: “that we being dead to sins,” etc.

The design was great and glorious, being no less than to rescue the deathless soul from the defiling, withering, and destroying effects of transgression, by its effectual power, to clothe it with Divine “righteousness” here, and then to present it faultless before, etc.

The fruits of Christ’s sufferings are,

1st. *Justification*. Christ was bruised and crucified as an expiatory Sacrifice, and *by his stripes we are healed*.——Whatever guilt, condemnation, and misery sin has produced, it can all be destroyed by the sacrifice of Christ, which will make a man “*dead to sins.*” The children of God die *legally* to sin in their justification. By the exercise of

faith in the Redeemer's sacrifice, their sins are *blotted out*; the guilt is removed—they are made free from condemnation. Rom. 5 : 1 ; 8 : 1 ; etc. — There was a very remarkable type of this under the law. Lev. 16. "Your sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

2d. *Sanctification*. Having been the servant of sin, the regenerated must be set apart to a life of "righteousness," and this implies the *death*, the *mortification* of sin, and a new, holy *life of righteousness*, according to the example which Christ left, that we should follow his steps. Principles of a new life are communicated to the believing soul in the day of conversion—the principles of "righteousness," or in other words, of holiness, of love, heavenly-mindedness, confidence in God, and a reverential, filial awe of his Majesty.

Thus the guilt of "sins" is forever removed from true believers; and not only the guilt when they are justified, but the *power* also is taken away by sanctification. He who gave his Son *for* us, gives also his Holy Spirit to us. He will not suffer sin to rule. They are united to Christ by faith, and "sanctified by the faith that is in him." Finally, he will finally remove sin altogether, its existence, as well as its effects.

APPLICATION.

1st. Behold Christ as the only Source of salvation. "By his stripes," etc. By his sufferings the *legal wound* of guilt is healed — the *spiritual wounds* of the soul are healed — and also its *spiritual sorrows and sufferings*.

2d. Behold the amazing love of Christ. "He bare." "By his stripes." What love! Comparisons can give but a very imperfect view of this love which passeth knowledge. Though we should suppose all the love of all the men that ever were, or will be, on the earth, and all the love of all the angels in heaven, united in one heart, it would be but a cold heart to that which was pierced by the soldier's spear!

3d. Show your gratitude by a "life of righteousness."

CHRIST THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD.

"This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." — JOHN 4 : 42.

In the former part of the chapter, there is an interesting account of Christ's interview with the woman of Samaria, who was convinced by his teaching that he was the true Messiah. — With the Samaritans he abode two days, and his teaching, his conduct, etc., were so wise, so holy, and benevolent, that many believed on him, and said, "This is indeed," etc.

I. THE STATE OF THE WORLD REQUIRED A SAVIOUR.

Mankind are ruined by sin. It has defiled all the powers of the

soul, and estranged the heart from God. Man is a rebel, and by rebellion he has incurred the displeasure of the Infinite God. He is exposed to everlasting perdition.

This guilt is universal. Rom. 3 : 19, 23. Look at your own hearts for a confirmation of this awful truth—look around you—look abroad; and wherever you direct your eye, you see the prostration of the soul—you see sin feeding on the very vitals of man, and preparing him for banishment from the presence of the Lord, etc. Rom. 3 : 10, etc.

No human power can save the world from the effects of transgression. Vows, alms, pilgrimages, sacrifices, etc., cannot atone for accumulated guilt, nor in the least remove it. Micah 6 : 6, 7.

II. CHRIST BECAME THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD.

1st. *He was Divinely appointed.* "Him hath God the Father sealed." John 6 : 27; Isa. 61 : 1-3. All the sublime predictions by the prophet Isaiah, and others, show the great love of Jehovah in appointing his only-begotten Son to become the Saviour of the world. John 3 : 16.

2d. In conformity with this appointment, *the Redeemer voluntarily became the Saviour of the world*, 1 Tim. 1 : 15. Hence his name, Matt. 1 : 21; his declarations, Matt. 18 : 11; his offices; he came into the world in our nature,

(1.) *As a prophet*, to unfold the will of God—to state the design of his mission—to confirm it by miracle—to teach men how to live—to disclose the glories of immortality, and to chase away from the mind darkness and error.

(2.) *As a priest*, to offer up the sacrifice of himself, as an atonement for sin. See Dan. 9 : 24. Follow him to the garden, and see his agony and his bloody sweat; follow him to the Sanhedrim, to the bloody hall of Pilate, and mark the contradiction of sinners he suffered there; proceed forward to the ignominious cross, and see him transfixed. There his "soul was made an offering for sin;" there he was smitten of God and afflicted; there the sword of Divine justice was unsheathed, and pierced his heart; there he conquered when he fell; bringing forth glory to God in the highest, etc. In Heb. ch. 9, the priesthood of Christ is stated. He sustained that office well—and he still sustains it. Heb. 7 : 25.

(3.) *As a King.* He now sits and reigns in heaven as a King. He governs the world—he reigns in his Church—he rules in the hearts of his people—he defends his "holy nation"—he subdues the rebellious; and he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

III. THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST AS A SAVIOUR.

1st. *He is a willing Saviour.* This appears from his promptitude in undertaking the office—from the invitations of mercy which dropped from his lips—from the promises of welcome and acceptance which he gave—from the examples of his saving power; and from his dying in the sinner's place. "Him that cometh unto me," etc.

2d. *He is a free Saviour.* That is, he gives all his unsearchable riches to the vilest of the vile without money and without price.

3d. *He is an all-sufficient Saviour;* called the "Mighty God," and

"able to save to the very uttermost," even the "chief of sinners." His "blood cleanses from all sin."

He can save

- (1.) *From the guilt and condemnation of sin.* Rom. 8 : 24.
- (2.) *From the dominion of sin and its polluting power.* Titus 2 : 12; 3 : 5.
- (3.) *From the tormenting power, and the destructive consequences of sin.* Heb. 9 : 14; 1 Pet. 3 : 18.
- (4.) *From the wrath of God, and the vengeance of everlasting fire.* 1 Thess. 1 : 10; Rom. 6 : 9.

And this salvation is followed by *eternal glory*. He carries on the work of grace in the hearts of his people, and consummates it in glory. 2 Tim. 2 : 10.

IV. THE EVIDENCE THAT CHRIST WAS THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD: "This is indeed the Christ," etc.

During his abode with the Samaritans, he would present to them the evidences of his Messiahship, by a reference to the predictions of the prophets, and their fulfilment in himself. — They were fully convinced that he was the Saviour, v. 39-42.

Those who are saved by Christ can give the same testimony, for

1st. *They have the witness in themselves.* They have proved the "Gospel to be the power of God to their salvation." — They feel themselves to be saved and healed by Christ the great Physician. Once they were blind, etc.—Once they were captives, but he has made them free. Though miracles, and the extraordinary influences of the Spirit have ceased, "he that believes," etc. 1 John 5 : 10; Rom. 8 : 16.

2d. Believers are well assured that Christ was the Saviour of the world, *by regarding the internal evidence of the Scriptures.* They have seen Christ as the antitype of all the types; the substances of all the shadows, and every minute incident referring to the Messiah, as announced by the prophets, exactly fulfilled in him, and by him. Heb. 1 : 1. — They have examined his *miracles*, and found them free from collusion; they have examined his teaching, and found him infinitely wise; his life, and found it perfectly holy; his deeds, and found them benevolent and disinterested; his motives, and found them perfectly pure. With such self-denial, separation from the world, holiness, purity, etc., he could not have been an impostor, but "indeed the Christ," etc. They have scrutinized his Apostles, and found them *men of God*, actuated not by worldly or fleshly motives, but by the purest love — exposing themselves to the greatest privations, and most cruel sufferings and death, to *testify the Gospel of the grace of God*. What wise man would have so acted, if the Gospel had not been true?

3d. *Christianity has survived all the attempts of its enemies to destroy it.* What tortures have been inflicted and endured! What fires have been kindled, and scaffolds erected! Yet it has been Divinely preserved; for God has said, "No weapon," etc.

4th. It is proved that Christ was the Saviour by a *reference to the pages of History*. That there was, 1800 years ago, a body of men,

called Christians, is as evident as that a race of men were then existing in the world, though some have rashly denied it. Some of these men were possessed of great piety and talent, and boldly defended the truth of the Gospel.* — Their testimony is confirmed by that of Jews and Heathens, who, by their invectives against the Christians, do most evidently prove that there was such a body of men in the world. Hence Tacitus and Suetonius published their writings above 1700 years ago, and they are always, and very justly appealed to, as credible witnesses on this occasion.†

The actual existence of Christ is proved in the same way. It would be absurd to suppose thousands derived their name from Christ, and endured death for his sake, even in the same age in which he was said to have lived, if they had not been well assured of his actual existence. Many of the afore-mentioned authors declare that the Christians were denominated from Christ, and Tacitus expressly adds, that he was put to death under Pontius Pilate, who was procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius. The ancient Christian apologists often appeal to the Acts of Pilate in the Memoirs of his government which he transmitted to Rome, as containing an account of these transactions; and as the appeal was made to those who had the command of the public records, it is evident that such testimonies were then extant. But this fact many of our enemies have not denied, but owned it, and ridiculed Christians on that account. The Jews, in the first ages, in their writings call Jesus *the man who was hanged*, or crucified, and his followers *the servants of the crucified Person*. Lucian rallies them for deserting the pompous Train of the Heathen Deities to worship one whom he impiously calls “a crucified Impostor.” Many other references to ancient history might be given. That there was such a Person as Jesus Christ is as certain as history can make it.

APPLICATION.

1st. Let Christians examine and be satisfied with the truth of the Gospel.

* “Such as *Clemens, Romanus, Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Tatian, Athenagoras*, and *Theophilus Antiochenus*, who all wrote before the year 200, and some in the first century. Not to mention *Barnabas* and *Hermas*, nor any of those mentioned by *Eusebius*, whose Books are all lost, except some fragments, preserved chiefly by that excellent writer.” — DODDRIDGE.

† “For *Tacitus* assures us, that in *Nero’s* days, who began his reign but about twenty years after the death of Christ, ‘There was a vast multitude of Christians, not only in Judea, but at Rome too, against whom *Nero* raised a persecution, attended with such circumstances of ignominy and cruelty, as moved the compassion even of their enemies;’ of which number this historian evidently was. . . . His contemporary *Suetonius* in his more concise manner attests the same. And *Pliny*, the intimate friend and correspondent of both, being employed in *Trajan’s* time to persecute the Christians, writes an account of them to that Emperor, which though commonly known, must be mentioned, as it is so highly important. After having spoken very favorably of their moral character, he adds, ‘That many of both sexes, and every age and rank, were infected with this superstition,’ as he thinks fit to express it. ‘that it was got into the villages as well as the cities, and that, till he began to put the laws in execution against them, the temples of the heathen deities were almost deserted, and hardly any could be found who would buy victims for them.’ It might be added, that *Marcus Antoninus*, who wrote a few years after *Pliny*, mentions the Christians as examples of a resolute and obstinate contempt of death; and ‘tis generally supposed they are the Galileans, whom *Epictetus* speaks of in the same view.” — DODDRIDGE.

2d. Be thankful for such a Saviour.

3d. The rejector of Christ has cause for alarm.

EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION.

"And knew the grace of God in truth."—COL. 1 : 6.

THE Gospel possesses a sovereign efficacy to reduce the rebellious soul to the obedience of Christ.——The Colossians had felt its saving and transforming power, of which the Apostle reminds them in the preceding verses.——How important to know the grace of God in truth! Other kinds of knowledge may be important——but this is infinitely so.

I. WHAT DOES THE GRACE OF GOD IMPLY?

1st. Sometimes the term, "the grace of God," refers to the Gospel, which proceeds from the grace of God, and wherein his grace is offered and bestowed upon all penitent believers, 1 Pet. 5 : 12. It is called "the Gospel of the grace of God;" "the grace of God that bringeth salvation," etc. Such language is designed to teach us three great facts.

(1.) The contrivance of salvation was of grace. It was the invention of God in all the parts of it, and never could have been devised by men.

(2.) The accomplishment of salvation is of grace, Rom. 5 : 2. Sinners are saved entirely by the complete atonement, etc., of Christ.

(3.) The application is entirely of grace; for no human merit can obtain the renewing influences of the Spirit.——Thus grace reigns to purify and humble us; it reigns in our sanctification, and will forever reign in our glorification.

2d. *Man required such a revelation of grace.* His state is one of ruin, and infinite demerit. He ~~is~~ exposed to perdition, and absolutely helpless.——Hence the grace of God meets and suits his case. The whole plan of salvation is *perfectly free and gratuitous*. Grace signifies the free love and favor of God, which is the source of all the benefits which the sinner receives from him, Rom. 11 : 6; 2 Tim. 1 : 9. It was this mercy or love of God that found out redemption for mankind, John 3 : 16: Rom. 5 : 20. The sufferings and death of Christ are ascribed to grace. 2 Cor. 8 : 9.*

* "Had I all the faith of the patriarchs, all the zeal of the prophets, all the good works of the apostles, the constancy of the martyrs, and all the flaming devotion of seraphs, I would disclaim them all in point of dependence, and rely only on free grace; I would count all but dung and dross when put in competition with the infinitely precious death and meritorious righteousness of my dear Saviour Jesus Christ; and if ever a true and lasting reformation of manners is produced amongst us, it must (under the influences of the eternal Spirit) be produced by the doctrines of free grace; till these doctrines are generally inculcated, the most elegant harangues from the pulpit, or the most correct dissertations from the press, will be no better than a pointless arrow, or a broken bow."—HERVEY.

II. WHAT IS MEANT BY KNOWING THE GRACE OF GOD IN TRUTH?

1st. The religion of the Colossians *was not mere knowledge*. A knowledge of religious truths, and especially of those connected with the salvation of the soul, is absolutely necessary. But if such knowledge lead not to experimental acquaintance with Christ, it will profit nothing.

2d. It *was not mere profession*. It was sincere profession combined with possession of the grace of God, and no other religion will stand in the time of trial. The Pharisees professed much — but Christ denominated them a race of hypocrites.

3d. It *was not mere form and ceremony*. The depraved heart of man loves a formal and ceremonial religion, but God looks at the heart. Ezek. 33 : 31–33; Rom. 2 : 28, 29; John 4 : 24; 2 Tim. 3 : 5.

The religion of the Colossians was experimental. “They knew the grace of God in truth.” They found it, they felt it to be true. — The Apostle calls them “saints and faithful brethren,” v. 2. They were in a state of grace — they enjoyed salvation. — In the context, the operations of grace upon them are stated :

(1.) *The Gospel had been preached to them*, v. 6, 7. “Faith cometh by hearing.” The word enlightened them.

(2.) *They had received it*. They had mixed faith with hearing, and it was “quick and powerful,” etc. They enjoyed the effects of that reception — they were made accepted in the Beloved, being *freely pardoned and justified*, Rom. 4 : 16; 5 : 1; 8 : 1. — they were *regenerated*, Tit. 3 : 5; James 1 : 18. — they were adopted — endowed with a lively hope, 1 Pet. 1 : 3, 4.

(3.) *Their piety was exemplary*. Other Christians had heard of it, v. 4; it brought forth fruit, v. 6. Like its Divine Author, grace in its own nature is invisible, but is manifest by its effects. It is a seed that springs up, a light that shines, a fire that burns. — Christians “hold forth the word of life; they are ‘living epistles’ known and read of all men.” They bear the image of the Saviour, and are a transcript of the truth believed. The “*grace*” that is in them beautifies and adorns them, and renders them truly graceful.

(4.) *Their piety was constant*. They had borne fruit “since the day they heard” and received the Gospel, v. 6. The root of the matter was in them: they were plants of righteousness, and nothing had destroyed their life and vigor.

(5.) *They enjoyed the assurance of salvation*. “They knew the grace of God in truth;” that is sincerely, really, and feelingly. They felt that the Gospel was not a cunningly devised fable — spiritual darkness had passed away — Christ dwelt in their hearts — they were dead to sin — to the world — they desired a better country, etc.

APPLICATION.

1st Ascribe all the honor of salvation to God.

2d. Pray for Divine influence to render your religion exemplary and fruitful.

3d. Be deeply abased on account of spiritual deficiency.

CHRIST MIGHTY TO SAVE.

"Mighty to save."—Isa. 63 : 1.

THIS chapter is generally supposed to refer to Christ's triumphs on the cross for all his people. It commences with a most interesting truth; the might or power of Christ to save.——No object on earth can vie in importance with the salvation of the soul.

I. THAT THE RUINED CONDITION OF MAN REQUIRED A MIGHTY SAVIOUR.

As salvation implies deliverance, it is evident that man was in a state of wretchedness, danger, and exposed to the wrath to come, when Christ came to save. Luke 19 : 10. He has lost his *image*, his *purity*, his *favor* and *communion*. He has broken his laws; he is a traitor, and *condemned to perish*.

That this is the state of man, is proved by Scripture. Rom. 8 : 11, 12, etc.——Man is so awfully ruined by sin, that the most striking figures are employed to represent it. Man is stated to be *diseased*, *leprous*, *blind*, *naked*, in *beggary*, a *debtor*, a *prisoner*, a *captive*, and as *dead*.

This ruination is universal; it has ruined the whole of man's body; and all the powers, purity, and happiness of his soul.

It has made man, therefore, the creature of *impotency*. He cannot deliver himself.

What a loss has man sustained! It is enough to make an angel weep. Think of his being created in righteousness, etc., now resembling a demon, etc.

Awful reflection! the sinner is insensible to his danger. He is asleep on the edge of the precipice of perdition; the fell disease of sin is devastating his soul, etc., yet he feels not his danger!

II. THAT CHRIST IS MIGHTY TO SAVE.

1st. *He is divine*. The only begotten Son of God; "the brightness of," etc. John 1 : 1-4, and other passages.

2d. *He became incarnate*, that he might suffer, and bleed, and die, for "without shedding," etc. John 1 : 14; Heb. 8 : 3; 2 : 14, 15.

He was not only an excellent and holy man, but was God. Rom. 9 : 5; Heb. 1 : 3; Phil. 2 : 6.

3d. *The design of his mission was to save*. For this sublime purpose, he was delegated, 1 John 5 : 11. He was consecrated as the foundation, Isa. 28 : 16. His name is Jesus, Matt. 1 : 21. God declared him to be his Son. Matt. 3 : 17.——"He was manifested to destroy the works of the devil."

4th. *He has done all that was necessary* to save man. Fulfilled the law; endured its penalty; expiated transgression by the shedding of his blood, 2 Cor. 8 : 9; Phil. 2 : 7, 8. He conquered man's spiritual

foes, and rose to heaven as a mighty conqueror. Heb. 9 : 24, and to intercede for his people. —

Observe now the display of his power.—His power to save as Mediator, is founded on the efficacy of his atonement. Rom. 1 : 4; Matt. 28 : 18. — He is mighty

1st. To save from *the law's curse*, Gal. 3 : 13. He that believeth is delivered from condemnation. Acts 13 : 39.

2d. *From the defilement of sin*. He can take the plague of sin away, and heal the leprosy of the soul. Zech. 13 : 1; 1 John 1 : 9.

3d. *From the power and malice of Satan*. Col. 1 : 13.

4th. *From all consequences of sin*. — The fear and sting of death, the dominion of the grave, and the wrath to come.

5th. His might or power to save, includes elevation to glory — body raised — united to soul — both glorified.

III. WHAT IS NECESSARY TO REALIZE HIS SAVING POWER.

1st. *A deep conviction of ruin*; that we are ready to perish.

2d. *A knowledge of Christ as the mighty Saviour*. A conviction that we need such a Saviour; a cordial approval of the method in which he saves.

3d. *The renouncement of all self-dependence*, — and *faith in Christ*. — Acts 20 : 21; "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," etc. It is the surrender of the soul to this mighty Saviour; it is "trusting in him for all that the soul needs." Eph. 1 : 13.

APPLICATION.

1st. What encouragement to the despairing sinner!

2d. How important that all should inquire after salvation!

3d. How great the danger of those who reject it!

NECESSITY OF CHRISTIAN WATCHFULNESS.

"And that knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep." — Rom. 13 : 11.

It is supposed by some that the Apostle here intended to remind Christians of the superior privileges of Christianity over the state of Heathenism from which they had just emerged. — But though the Apostle may have such a reference, yet the important doctrine in verses 11–14, is that a deep conviction of the nearness of eternity, will cause the soul to cleave to Christ, and prompt to an upright life in the intercourse of man with man.

Consider,

I. THE STATE FROM WHICH A TRANSITION IS NECESSARY. It is a state of *sleep*.

This term is frequently employed to describe the insensibility of man to his best interests. Eph. 1 : 14; 1 Thess. 5 : 6, 7. The term *sleep* applies —

1st. *To the unregenerate.* They are *asleep*. This implies *darkness*. 1 Thess. 5 : 7; and the understanding of the sinner is darkened. Eph. 4 : 18. — It implies *insensibility*. The danger which surrounds him, etc., the voice of mercy calling him to escape for his life, makes no impression upon him. — It implies *forgetfulness*, for the natural man has lost sight of God — of the end of his creation, etc. — It implies *delusion*. Even as a man in sleep dreams he is eating, etc., see Isa. 29 : 8. What is the sinner but a *dreamer* — a pursuer of phantoms, etc., to the neglect of that which is substantial in time and eternity?

This is an awful state. Time is rapidly passing away, death is coming, but the time of his arrival is uncertain, and yet the man is sleeping in the midst of such uncertainty, with sin unpardoned and guilt unremoved. "Awake, thou that sleepest," etc.

This character attaches to all the unregenerate. Men, by nature, are active only in deeds of wickedness, or business transactions; they are awake to sinful gratification, etc.; but in regard to religion, they are insensible, and the slumbers of night are on their eyelids. — It applies —

2d. *To the backslider.* He did run well. Once he was awake, the Spirit having aroused and quickened him; once he was active in the Church; but the world, the creature, or Satan, has cast him down from his former position. He has left his first love, his vows are broken — the eyes are closed; the powers of the mind have become dormant; the man is asleep; and sometimes the second slumber is deeper than the first. Rev. 2 : 4, 5.

3d. It will also apply to *the Church of God*. Some of its members are asleep — inactive; they do nothing, and yet are numbered with the people of God. — Some are *partially* asleep. Perhaps the world, etc., has begun to act as an opiate. — Hence, they are beginning to decline; to neglect the means of grace, self-examination, etc. If they do not arouse themselves their eyes will be finally closed, so anodyne is the influence of carnal things. This should induce self-examination; "Am I sleeping?"

II. THE NATURE OF THE CHANGE WHICH IS SO NECESSARY; "*It is high time to awake out of sleep.*"

To awake is to arouse from spiritual slumber by an exercise of grace, and leaving off sinful courses, and performing duties required.

1st. *This change can only be effected by Divine agency.* "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." The slumber is so potent that none but he can awaken from it. The anodyne is so powerful that none but the great Physician can apply an effectual antidote. Vain are all human means, if not combined with the influence of that Spirit which convinces of sin, etc. "Not by might," etc. Hence, this Divine influence is —

2d. *Associated with human instrumentality.* The members of Christ's

mystical body, who have been awakened themselves, and especially ministers of the Gospel, are appointed by God to awaken others. It is their duty to cry, "Awake thou that sleepest," etc. "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, they persuade men." — Those who use the means, pray for Divine influence to render their call effectual. Ezek. 37 : 9, 10.

8d. The result of these operations is a *complete change and renovation of character*. The sinner awakes from his sleep. He awakes from his *darkness* of guilt and condemnation, and enjoys the liberty of the Gospel. — He awakes from a state of *insensibility* to a right perception of the truth, and to a full impression of Gospel influence, and of the powers of the world to come. — He awakes from a state of *delusion*, to a sound judgment and right apprehension of things, from shadows to realities, even as one awaketh from the romantic scenery of a dream, to behold things as they really are. — He awakes from a state of *inactivity*, induced by spiritual slumber, to a state of joyful activity in the service of God — to spend and be spent for Christ.

III. THE NECESSITY AND IMPORTANCE OF SUCH A CHANGE TAKING PLACE IMMEDIATELY.

It is *high time* to awake. This is a beautiful figure. The dawn of day, the approaching light of the morning, is the time to arouse from slumber. In the darkness of night men sleep. The world has been sunk in the *night* of heathenism and sin. But now the morning light of the Gospel dawns. It is time, therefore, for men to cast off the deeds of darkness, and rise to life, and purity, and action. Acts 17 : 30, 31. — We shall soon have done with all sublunary things ; we shall soon appear before God ; it becomes us, therefore, to awake, and go forth to meet him, having our loins girded, and our lamps burning. — *It is high time to awake out of sleep!* Behold the Judge is at the door!

It is high time to awake, because

1st. Such a state of inactivity and insensibility is *highly criminal*. It involves the resistance of the Gospel, and of the Spirit, which urge the sinner to awake.

2d. *It has already been attended with great loss*. Gospel light has been shining, and exhilarating the minds of believers, while you have been in darkness ; they have been feeding upon heavenly manna, while you have been eating husks ; they have had the witness of God within them, while you have been dreaming about that which satisfieth not. Therefore, it is high time to awake.

3d. The Church of God is frequently *weakened and decreased by death*. — Therefore it is time for the Church to awake, and fill up these vacant places.

"It is high time to awake, for others are awake, and up about us. Know the time to be a busy time ; we have a great deal of work to do, and our Master is calling us to it again and again. Know the time to be a perilous time ; we are in the midst of enemies and snares. It is high time to awake, for the Philistines are upon us ; our neighbor's house is on fire, and our own in danger. It is time to awake, for we have slept enough, 1 Pet. 4 : 3 ; high time indeed, for, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh." — MATTHEW HENRY.

 While we are sleeping, the enemy is sowing his tares, hardening

the heart, and ensnaring souls. His emissaries are at work. Atheists, infidel socialists, are disseminating their poison. Church of the living God, awake!!

4th. *Such a state involves the greatest peril.*

(1.) *The difficulty of awaking increases with delay.* Bodily sleep, indeed, becomes lighter as morning approaches. But this slumber of the spirit becomes deeper and deeper, and heavier and heavier, till the individual sleeps the sleep of death. Every time you hear in vain you grow more sleepy, and the preacher's voice becomes mere music to lull you. Sinai flashes its lightnings, and rolls its thunders now in vain; once you trembled, now you can fold your arms, and close your eyes, and repose at the foot of the burning mount.——The wondrous cross which creates all the harmony and rapture of paradise, and engages the mighty intellects of ethereal spirits, now possesses few charms for you. [Enlarge in reference to heaven, hell, and eternity.] Time is passing, and you are becoming still more drowsy. Awake, awake!

(2.) *The frailty and uncertainty of human existence.* Remember that while you are sleeping you may die.——“What is your life? it is even as a vapor,” etc. You cannot calculate on futurity. “Boast not thyself of to-morrow,” etc. Would it be honorable for you to die in such a state? Would it be pleasing to survivors? Would it be attended with happy results? O, it is high time to awake; for

(3.) You will become the victims of the Divine anger if you awake not. The neglecters of salvation cannot escape — the unholy cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

APPLICATION.

- 1st. Let Christians watch lest they begin to sleep.
- 2d. Let Christians be active to awaken others, and pray for the aids of the Divine Spirit.
- 3d. Let those who are beginning to awake be encouraged. The Spirit will quicken you — Christ will save you.

THE NEARNESS OF SALVATION.

“For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” — Rom. 13 : 11.

RELIGION is a vital principle implanted in the heart by Divine agency, and there it produces its joyful effects. Christ dwells in the hearts of believers by faith, and from that faith springs the “hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began.”——As the Christian's life is one of conflict, this hope has a most supporting influence.——It indicates to the Christian that all his trials shall end, that conflict shall terminate, and that, through grace, he shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. This supported primitive Christians. Hence the text.——Their piety led them to see the nothingness of this world, and earnestly to long for eternal rest.

I. AN INTERESTING TIME AND EXERCISE REFERRED TO: "*when we believed.*"

This is the most interesting period of a man's existence. — The day of his birth is interesting, for then he commences an immortal existence, but that may be clouded with woe. — The day of his death is solemnly interesting, for then he departs to his eternal destiny, perhaps the blackness of darkness forever. — But the time when a man dies to sin, and is born again of the Spirit, etc., that is the most interesting; for then he is born from above, and born for eternity. Then his name is written in the Lamb's book of life.

When we believed. This reminds the believer

1st. *That once he did not believe.* Once he had no interest in Christ, no connection with him; he was without God, etc. He was the child of wrath even as others.

2d. *That he became the subject of spiritual alarm and conviction.* Some providence, some afflictive dispensation, some sermon, in connection with Divine influence, brought him to a stand, and made him tremble like the Jailor. Then he became anxious, and restless for salvation, saying, "What must I do to be saved?"

3d. *That he was enabled to repose his soul on Christ for salvation.* He perceived the adaptation of Christ to his necessities as a sinner; he saw the fulness and freeness of salvation, and, abhorring himself as in dust and ashes, he cast his guilty and defiled soul upon Christ.

4th. *The result of faith was the enjoyment of salvation.* Pardon, peace, and every other blessing.

But this was only present salvation, the commencement of salvation on earth, which is to be consummated in eternity. Here we commence the Christian race, journey, fight—but the results are to be realized hereafter. "For now is our salvation nearer," etc.

II. A MOST INTERESTING SUBJECT SPECIFIED.

That is, final salvation, called "*our salvation.*" Some suppose that "salvation" here refers to deliverance from *persecution*; others to increased *light* and knowledge of the Gospel, so that they could more clearly discern their duty than when they became believers. But its proper meaning is *deliverance from sin, and all its effects, and perfect and eternal happiness in heaven.* Observe,

Our deliverance from *sin* is nearer. Sin has been our greatest torment; but it will not annoy us much longer. A few more days of conflict, and then Almighty grace shall exalt us to that sphere, where sin shall never contaminate—where all is infallibly pure. Rev. 21: 27.

Our deliverance from *every species of temptation* is nearer; whether it comes from the world and its pursuits and enjoyments, or from the great Adversary of souls, the time is coming when the soul shall be assailed no more. The fiery darts of the wicked shall be forever destroyed; we have not long to be tempted, for our salvation is nearer, etc.

Our deliverance from *all sorrow and trouble* is nearer. Shall soon have done with *poverty* which has so distressed us—with *afflictions* which have so chastened us—with *family trials* which have so corroded

our hearts—with *bereavements* which have so filled us with anguish, and with every source of trouble. See Rev. 7 : 14–17 ; 21 : 4. Yes, our salvation is nearer. The infinite treasure of love and glory to enrich us is nearer—the rest of paradise, the peace of heaven are nearer—our reunion with friends not lost, but gone before, is nearer.

Our deliverance from *death* is nearer. We have yet to die—thoughts of death sometimes distress us. How shall we pass through Jordan's streams?—Death itself shall be destroyed ; we shall enter the mansions of immortality, over which death can never hover. Rev. 20 : 14.

But salvation implies not only deliverance from evil, but the enjoyment of everlasting glory in heaven.

Our admission to *heaven* is nearer.

Its refulgent light is nearer, when the darkness of ignorance shall have passed away ; when the deep mysteries of God shall be explained ; when we shall understand his marvellous works ; when these capacities shall be expanded, and forever expand.

The *vision of God in Christ*—the vision of infinite intelligences—the vision of perfected spirits—the vision of the congregated hosts of God's elect, is nearer. — *Heavenly association* is nearer. We shall walk with them in white : shall tune our harps with them in glory, etc. etc.

The honors and dignities of heaven are nearer. The crown is nearer ; the palm is nearer ; the golden harps are nearer ; the river of life, the tree of life, and the golden streets, are nearer, than when we believed.

The employments, pleasures, and undying praises of heaven are nearer.

Eternity also is nearer. Days, weeks, months, are nothing there ; hundreds, thousands, and millions, are no more there ; time eras, and determinate durations, are past forever there ; all is fixed, all eternal there ! There is no first and last, sooner and later, in eternity. Here our moments are numbered, and precious ; but O that blessed state when numbers are no more ! No incursions there on the adoring soul, from the world, or sin, or Satan. No weariness there, where our adorations shall not be measured by minutes, cramped by corruption, or cut short by bodily indisposition. But when we have stood as ardent adorers before the throne ten thousand years, we shall be as vigorous in our love, as fervent in our adorations, as when we began the employment of heaven.

Once a great king made a great feast to his grandees for an hundred and four score days ; nothing less than a royal treasury could support such vast expense. But the King of kings shall feast and satiate all his mighty angels, and all his chosen people, on his own undiminished fulness, *through eternity*. There is a bliss without a blank, abundance beyond all bounds, and possession without a period. No matter, then, what years we lose ; for whenever the lamp of life expires, the sun shall rise, and shine forever.

III. A MOST INTERESTING FACT ANNOUNCED : "*our salvation is NEARER.*"

This is very evident. As if the Apostle had said, "We are advancing

nearer to heaven. We are hastening to the world of glory. Daily we are approaching the kingdom of light. The lapse of every day brings us nearer the world of perfect light." That our salvation is nearer than when we believed, is evident

1st. *From the Statements of Scripture.* It is very important to have this impressed upon the mind. This the Apostles labored so to do; Heb. 10 : 25; 1 Pet. 4 : 7; James 5 : 8; Phil 4 : 5; Rev. 22 : 20.

2d. *From the flight of time.* "Nearer than when we believed." How long is it since you believed? Five, ten, twenty, or thirty years since. Then your salvation is nearer. And the rest of your days shall pass away swift as the *weaver's shuttle*, or with the velocity of the *wind*, and your life ultimately evaporate like a *vapor*. How much nearer then is your salvation?

3d. *From the figurative representations of the Christian.* He is a *prisoner* in the body of sin and death, groaning to be delivered, and his redemption draweth nigh, 2 Cor. 5 : 1.——He is called a *Racer*; the race is partly run, and will soon be over, and he shall "*obtain*."——He is called a *soldier*, and many a foe has he vanquished, and the fight is nearly over.——He is called a *pilgrim*, a *traveller*, going home to heaven. Every step brings him *nearer*, and he will soon reach his Father's house.——He may be called a *voyager*, who has sailed over a considerable portion of life's ocean; and he will soon have done with all its dangerous quicksands and storms, and enter the haven of eternal rest. The port of heaven is nearer. "Our salvation is nearer."

4th. *The real Christian feels his salvation nearer*, etc. His faith in Christ is gradually becoming stronger; and his hope of heaven brighter. He has sensible tokens, through grace, of meetness for death and glory, and frequently strong aspirations after it. "Why are thy chariot wheels so long in coming?" "I have a desire to depart," etc.

APPLICATION.

- 1st. Let Christians think daily, hourly, of that which is so near them.
- 2d. Be ready for the summons to depart.
- 3d. Sinners are nearer perdition.

NEGLECT OF GOD IN SEASONS OF NEED.

"But none saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?"—
Job 35 : 10.

THIS is the language of Elihu, by which he shows the miserable state of the wicked, who, when troubles come upon them, have nothing to support them. When they cry out by reason of oppressions, they have no interest in God as the great Deliverer from trouble, and the Consolation of his people in every season of distress, ver. 9, 10.——This constitutes one essential difference between the righteous and the

wicked. The former habitually love God, and enjoy his gracious favor at all times; the latter are without God, without Christ, and without hope in the world. Nothing on earth is so important as an interest in God.

I. THAT SEASON OF AFFLICTION SHOULD INDUCE MEN TO SEEK AFTER GOD.

1st. *All men are exposed to trouble.* Both the righteous and the wicked. There is no exemption. Sin is the fruitful source of all. "Man is born to trouble," etc.

On account of their unpleasantness, and the mental gloom, and distress, which they produce, they are called "night," and "darkness." Isa. 21 : 12. Afflictions are not joyous, but grievous. See also Isa. 8 : 22; Job 3 : 24. There are sometimes to contend with,

(1.) *Temporal visitations of Divine displeasure.* When God visits a nation with war, famine, or pestilence, then it is a time of darkness. When families or individuals are subjected to poverty, to disappointment in their plans, hopes, etc., then it may be said to be night with them. — Happy are they who have then the God of light for their refuge!

(2.) *Bodily and mental afflictions* may be compared to night. — Health and its consequences resemble the bright cheering day; afflictions, and their effects, the gloom and blackness of night.

(3.) *The season of temptation* is a dark season. The wicked may not feel it as such, but Christians do. 1 Pet. 1 : 6.

(4.) *Declensions and backslidings* lead to darkness. Rev. 2 : 4, 5.

(5.) *Death is compared to night.* John 9 : 4; and the wicked will find it "the valley of the shadow of death."

2d. *It is the duty of all to inquire after God.* "Where is God my Maker?"

Inquiring after God implies,

(1.) *A conviction that he is the source of all that is good and excellent,* and that without an interest in him the soul will be ruined forever.

(2.) *Investigation of his character* by the light of revelation.

(3.) *A deep conviction of our state of alienation from him,* which induces repentance, godly sorrow, etc.

(4.) *A knowledge of Christ* as the Mediator, the way to the Father — a cordial reception of his own terms of reconciliation, and the exercise of faith in the Redeemer's sacrifice.

(5.) *Frequent prayer to him,* especially in seasons of darkness, believing that in him alone is our help found.

II. THAT GOD CAN AND WILL AFFORD RELIEF IN THE DARKEST SEASONS.

"Who giveth songs in the night;" or, as it might be translated, "And that shineth upon us, that we might praise him in the night."

He can give deliverance, grant support and consolation, and

sanctify all the trials of his people, which will make them utter songs of gladness and praise.

1st. It is evident *from his power*. "Who has an arm like God?" etc. Ps. 66 : 3; 46 : 1, etc.; Deut. 88 : 27. The Psalmist might well sing of his power. Ps. 21 : 13.

2d. It is evident *from his love*. He loves as a father, and will defend them, and save them. For them he spared not his own Son, etc. Therefore they shall sing the song of redeeming love. Luke 1 : 68.

3d. It is evident *from his promises*, — how numerous are they! — and the *faithfulness* which characterizes them. "God is not a man that he should lie," etc.

4th. It is evident *from what he has done*. "Call to remembrance the former days." See Heb. 11.

(1.) He has given songs in the *night of spiritual alarm*, when the convicted one has trembled like the Jailor, — who afterwards "rejoiced, believing," etc. Acts 16 : 34.

(2.) He has given songs in the *time of deprivation and want*. Hab. 3 : 17-19; 1 Cor. 4 : 11; yet the Apostles uttered songs of triumph, 2 Cor. 1 : 3, 4.

(3.) He has given songs *under bodily afflictions*. See the case of Paul, 2 Cor. 12 : 7-10. See also his powerful argument, 2 Cor. 4 : 17.

(4.) He has given songs in the *time of persecution*. Rom. 8 : 36, 37, etc.; 2 Tim. 1 : 12; Matt. 5 : 10. Job when afflicted in his body, and stripped of his possessions, uttered a song of confidence, Job 13 : 15.

(5.) He has given songs in the *hour of temptation*. 1 Cor. 10 : 13; James 1 : 12; 1 Pet. 1 : 6.

(6.) He has given songs in the *night of death*. Ps. 23 : 4; Acts 21 : 13; 1 Cor. 15 : 55.

III. WHY IS IT THAT SO FEW ARE INQUIRING AFTER GOD?

1st. Because *man naturally hates God*. Rom. 8 : 7. Some deny his existence, "The fool hath said," etc. Some wish there was no God, are glad when religion is opposed, would be happy to hear its truths confuted; if they could, they would obliterate the doctrine of providence, and the soul's immortality.

2d. *From the want of spiritual perception*. 1 Cor. 2 : 14.

3d. Because they are *intoxicated with the vain pleasures of earth*. Its honors — its enjoyments — its business engagements, etc., absorb their whole attention.

4th. *Pride also prevents them*. Ps. 10 : 4. To inquire after God would lead to profess him, to become identified with his people, etc., and their hearts revolt at this.

5th. *Because they are captives to Satan*. They are his servants — him they obey, Eph. 2 : 2.

APPLICATION.

1st. The happiness of those who inquire after God.

2d. The present and future misery of the wicked.

3d. Seek the Lord while he may be found.

THE WILL OF CHRIST.

"Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory."—JOHN 17 : 24.

"NEVER man spake like this man," and never man *prayed* like this man! What earnestness, pathos, propriety, and sublimity in his prayers, and especially in those which he offered just before his death!—It is most solemnly interesting to hear a man just about to step into eternity, in the calm exercise of his reason, fervently pray to God on the behalf of his survivors.——What must have been the sensations of the disciples when they saw their Lord lift up his eyes to heaven, and pour out this matchless prayer: ver. 1.

I. THE WILL OF CHRIST ON BEHALF OF HIS DISCIPLES: "Father, I will," etc.

This expression, though it commonly denotes *command*, is here only expressive of *desire*, and *intimation*, to the Father who heareth the Son always. It was not the custom of the Saviour to use language of command when addressing God.——He was about to ascend the cross, and there, as the great High Priest of his people, to offer up the sacrifice of himself:—he was about to ascend to heaven as the Advocate of his people, and it is in reference to these important offices that Christ intimates to his Father his will concerning his disciples.——I am about to finish the work which thou gavest me to do; I am about to suffer and die for the lost sheep, and as thou hast promised that I am to see of the travail of my soul, "Father, I will," etc. So let the Church ever regard Christ's constant intercession, as founded on the covenant engagements of the Father, and his own meritorious obedience and atonement. 1 John 2 : 1. The will of Christ cannot fail of being accomplished.——Observe

1st. The will of Christ is a *gracious will*. The vast spiritual wealth and eternal glory which he bequeaths to his people has been freely purchased. It is all of grace. Rom. 6 : 23 ; 1 Pet. 1 : 3. And it is also *freely given*. Isa. 55 : 1 ; Rev. 22 : 17.——Sometimes wills are made in favor of persons who have rendered good service to the testator, and which service demands at that solemn period remuneration.——But man is a rebel, impure, and the subject of infinite demerit. He is worthy of nothing less than everlasting perdition. This will is therefore a gracious will, Rom. 11 : 35.

2d. This will is expressive of *the Testator's infinite love and affection*. He died for sinners——he died that they might have life, and have it more abundantly. What love was this!——And he is anxious for the preservation, sanctification, and union of his people on earth; and for their glorification in heaven. It is the love of a master for his disciples, of a shepherd for his sheep, of a bridegroom for his bride. He cannot live in heaven without them. "Father, I will," etc.

3d. It is an *impartial will*. Some wills are partial. To one more is preferred than to another. But the penitent and the believing have

free access to all the blessings of salvation in time, and in eternity. "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Gal. 3 : 28. The believing peasant is as much interested in this will as the Christian monarch. Earthly distinctions the Gospel annihilates.

4th. This will *refers to vast wealth* to be enjoyed by the heirs of Christ. Not earthly wealth which is temporary, and corrupting, but spiritual wealth which is everlasting. What are gold and silver, houses and land, compared with this exceeding and eternal weight of glory? But this wealth will ~~be~~ considered in its proper place shortly.

5th. *It is a will that will certainly be executed.* For the Testator has power to bequeath the blessings of the covenant. The inspired volume is the precious deed of conveyance, written out under his own immediate direction. Here, as in human wills, the legacies are specified, and the legatees are particularly described. Here, as in human wills, we have witnesses, — the Father, Son, and Spirit. Here, as in human wills, the will of Christ is in force, for the Testator has died. Heb. 9 : 16. — "Heaven and earth shall pass away," etc.

II. THE PERSONS FOR WHOM THIS WILL WAS MADE: "*Those whom thou hast given me.*"

These words apply to the Church of God in every age of the world. See verse 20. All believers have an interest in Christ's gracious will; for these are given to Christ to realize all the sublime purposes of salvation; ver. 6, 9, 20.

1st. They are given to Christ *according to the covenant of grace.* That covenant respected the redemption of his people. It was stipulated that he should see, etc., Isa. 53 : 10. He has ransomed them — they are his purchased people.

2d. *They have believed on him* (v. 20) through the instrumentality of a preached Gospel, conjoined with the influence of the Holy Spirit. James 1 : 18; — and they enjoy all the blessed effects of faith in Christ. — They are his disciples, his people, and joint-heirs with him; they are committed into his hands as the great Shepherd of the sheep, to be fed and guarded by him unto life eternal. Isa. 40 : 11.

3d. They are given unto him *as instruments to carry on his cause in the world*, and to promote his glory. Some he makes apostles, ministers, teachers, etc. Eph. 4 : 11.

These are the legatees of his will; and they are to dwell with him in heaven, and to behold his glory.

III. THE PURPORT OF CHRIST'S GRACIOUS WILL: "That they may be with me where I am," etc.

What a gracious will is this! How comprehensive its details! How rich the inheritance which it bequeaths! How substantial, satisfying, and durable the wealth given to the saints! Talk not of the wills of the worldly rich, the noble, the honorable. Talk not of the wills of conquerors, or monarchs. They are all lighter than vanity when compared with the will of Christ the Prince of life, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

Ye palaces, sceptres, and crowns,
 Your pride with disdain I survey;
 Your pomps are but shadows and sounds,
 And pass in a moment away.
 The crown that my Saviour bestows
 Yon permanent sun shall outshine:
 My joy everlastingly flows—
 My God, my Redeemer, is mine!

The will of Christ refers,

1st. *To the place of happiness.* "Where I am." This, doubtless, refers to heaven, the dwelling-place of the great King. The words being in the present tense, refer to his Divine nature, one attribute of which is omnipresence; he was in heaven, and everywhere when he uttered these words. John 3 : 13. But he was about to leave the world, ver. 11, 13. All this was eventually fulfilled, and his disciples saw him ascend. Acts 1 : 9. There he sitteth at the right hand of God, angels, etc., being made subject unto him. It is there that his divinity shines through the humanity with ineffable brightness, and there he is beheld in all the moral grandeur of the only begotten Son of God.

It is a heaven of *unspeakable grandeur*. It is a *house*, in which there are many mansions. It is a *building* of God—it is a *kingdom*—it is an *inheritance*. The gates of the celestial city are pearls; its streets are pure gold; it has no need of the sun, Rev. 21 : 21, 23, 25. Of the glory and beauty of every other part of the universe, compared with the magnificence of heaven, it may be truly said, that "even that which was made glorious, hath no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth."

It is a heaven of *perfect purity*. The "Holy One of God" dwells there, and no sin can exist where he resides. It is the "habitation of his holiness." Rev. 21 : 27. O glorious heaven, where sin will never enter to contaminate!

It is a heaven of *perfect happiness*; of pure, boundless, and unmingled delight. Sin will be forever excluded, and as sin is the great source of every species of misery, there will never be the least apprehension of the happiness of heaven being interrupted.

It is the heaven of *immortality*. The inhabitant will never say I am sick. Death will never depopulate that kingdom. Rev. 21 : 4.

In this glorious place, Jesus designs his people to dwell. "Where I am." There he lives and reigns. "Because I live, ye shall live also." Hence he says, "Him that overcometh," etc. Rev. 3 : 12, 21. — The words imply

2d. *Fellowship with Christ.* They shall not only dwell in the place where Christ resides, but they shall be *with him* there. "That they may be with me."

To be with Christ is to be *conformed to him*—to bear his image. This stupendous change he has himself effected. — None else can be with him. An unregenerate sinner could not exist there. — But believers have been washed in his blood, renewed by his Spirit, stamped with the image of God, and kept by his power unto salvation; and at the resurrection, their bodies shall be sublimated and glorified

and united to their souls. Then they will "be like him, for they shall see him as he is."

To be with Christ, implies that we *shall be fully sensible of his presence*, for this is principally intended by our being with a person. Un-speakable is the difference between impressions made on the mind through the medium of the senses, and by the simple exercise of faith. — We readily admit the truth into our creed that Christ is spiritually present with us in this world; yet the soul can scarcely regard him but as an absent friend, whom death has wrapped in his dark foreboding mantle, and removed him from our view. This imperfection will be remedied in a future world; the soul will perceive objects through a different medium, and receive the full impress which they are calculated to make, and O how delightful and transporting will those impressions be! 1 Pet. 1 : 8. What then will it be to see him as he is, and behold him face to face!

To be with Christ is to enjoy his *special favor*. He shall lead his people to living fountains of water, and shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. The tokens of his love cheer their hearts during the present conflict with sin, and animate them when depressed with suffering. Every devotional feeling, every victory gained over temptation, and all the aid afforded in the discharge of duty, are tokens here of the Saviour's regard. Such manifestations are like a refreshing stream to the soul thirsting after God, and longing for the full fruition of his love. Let me but live (says the Christian) in thy presence, O my Saviour; whisper that I am thine, and afflictions shall be more welcome than all the prosperity that may gild the path of life, and dress in fair enchanting colors this vain and fascinating world. "Thus will I bless thee while I live," etc. Ps. 63 : 4-6. But, alas! how often is my soul covered with gloom and darkness! — Well, in heaven these tokens of Christ's favor will be indelible, subject to no delusion, to no decay. Wrapt with joy and wonder, we shall behold his countenance, beaming with smiles of love, and every action expressive of infinite benignity and condescension. O what light will he pour into the mind, what explanations he will give, what mysteries of time and eternity he will unravel, and what rapturous enjoyment he will create!

3d. *The special design of being with Christ*; "that they may behold my glory."

The glory of Christ is vast, and too great for the grasp of shortsighted man. The glory of God as seen in nature, the glorious firmament, the rolling stars, and the dazzling sun, are overwhelming to the mind of man. — What then must be the glory of our Immanuel in his state of heavenly exaltation! If that glory could be described to us by a winged seraph from before his throne, in the language of paradise, it would be too sublime to enter into a mortal ear. So the apostle said well, "Eye hath not seen," etc. — The saints will behold

(1.) *His essential glory*. He was infinitely glorious before he became incarnate. See ver. 5. Occasionally some glimpses of this glory were given. Abraham saw Christ's day, and was filled with rapturous joy. Moses said, "I beseech thee show me thy glory," and he saw it. "Isaiah saw his glory," when he had a vision in the temple of "*the Lord of Hosts*." His essential glory was occasionally manifested during

his abode on the earth. John 1 : 14. It was seen in his miracles—it was seen on the mount of transfiguration. Stephen and Paul saw it, and John in the isle of Patmos. Rev. 1 : 12, etc. His essential glory is described, John 10 : 30 ; Phil. 2 : 6 ; Heb. 1 : 1-3, etc.

(2.) *His glory as Mediator.* He entered into this glory when he ascended (Luke 24 : 26), as the reward of his sufferings and death, Eph. 1 : 20-23 ; Phil. 2 : 3, 9. — How different his state now from his humiliation and ignominious sufferings on earth ! What an ecstasy of delight is felt when we have unbarred the dungeon of the prisoner, and burst the fetters of the slave ! How great then must have been the joy of Christ when his sufferings were crowned with everlasting victory ! See him when he ascended upon high, leading captivity, etc. The heavenly powers crowd around his chariot ; they mark his honorable scars ; the crown of thorns is exchanged for the diadem of glory ; the reed of derision for the sceptre of omnipotence ; scoffs and revilings for the greetings of cherubim and seraphim. All but his wounds are changed ; all but the marks of laceration. These remain, and they show that he turned the weapon of Divine Justice upon himself. Behold him upborne before the congregated hosts of heaven. The kingdom divine is given him — a kingdom that shall not pass away.

This glory believers shall behold, and behold it forever. They shall behold all the glory of his attributes—the glory of his saving power in themselves and all the perfected spirits—the glory of his governing wisdom and power—the glory of rapturous praise from all the armies of the skies—the glory of universal empire—a glory which shall be augmenting forever.

To behold means to enjoy, to participate. How great the love of the great Shepherd ! Let my sheep participate in my glory. Let them be glorified together with me.

APPLICATION.

- 1st. Are we given to Christ ?
- 2d. See the safety of all those who believe in him. The heart of Christ is fully set on their happiness. "*I will,*" and who, and what can prevent it ?
- 3d. The will of Christ, and the prospect of glory it gives, will irradiate the valley of death.

THE FURNACE OF AFFLICTION.

"I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction."—ISA. 48 : 10.

No one can read the history of God's ancient people, without perceiving the wonderful compassion of God. — Their frequent transgressions frequently called for the exercise of his justice ; but he spared them in mercy. Sometimes he exercised them with heavy trials ; placing them in the furnace of affliction. — And it appears from the

context that a consignment to such an ordeal had been salutary in its influence.

A Furnace is a fireplace or crucible for melting and refining gold or other metals, Prov. 17 : 3 ; 27 : 21. Sometimes it is the emblem of cruel bondage, Deut. 4 : 20 ; Jer. 11 : 4. Also of judgments and severe and grievous afflictions, by which God punishes the rebellious, Ezek. 22 : 18-20 ; by the furnace of affliction he also tries and proves his people, as in the text. — This Furnace is

I. Afflictive.

That is, it is composed of many severe trials, of much mental and bodily suffering, which are designed by the great Proprietor and Manager of this furnace, to purge and refine the souls of his people.

Sometimes they are tried by *the scantiness of temporal things*. This may be induced by want of employment — it may be the result of sickness — it may result from the injustice of man. — Frequently the saints are chastised with *bodily afflictions*. “Wearisome days,” etc. The body is chastened with pain, burned with fever, or wasted by disease. — Sometimes they suffer from *bereavements*, when their friends or members of their families sicken and die. They too have domestic trials of various kinds from ungodly relatives — refractory and disobedient children, etc. etc. — Thousands of God’s people have been in this furnace. Moses whom God honored suffered affliction with the people of God ; David was persecuted by implacable enemies. Job, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and, in short, a whole host whose holy example shone with the brightest lustre, passed along a chequered path to heaven. Even Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

II. This Furnace is Divinely appointed.

It is not the result of chance ; afflictions arise not out of the dust ; they are not to be traced to mere natural causes ; they are not the works of our enemies merely. — They imply the moral government of God, and the wise and gracious arrangement of his providence. Every event is either his appointment, or has his all-wise permission. See Isa. 45 : 7 ; Job 2 : 10 ; 34 : 29. Such views of the subject have reconciled and supported the minds of the godly under their various afflictions. Job could say, “He performeth the thing that is appointed for me,” and found relief in it. David also was happy to say, “All my times are in thy hand.” Judah in captivity derived comfort from the Divine appointment, “Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not ?” Lam. 3 : 27. What a blessing that all is arranged by Infinite wisdom and love !

III. This Furnace is not vindictive, but gracious.

Divine chastisement may be a kind of punishment for sin committed. It supposes some fault, which it is intended to correct. But when men are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, it does not appear to be for sin. It may be for righteousness’ sake on the part of man, and for unrighteousness’ sake on God’s part. God will suffer persecution and reproach to befall us, when we are cold and indifferent in his cause. — But such punishment is not like that *inflicted on the wicked*.

—— Punishment is *vindictive* and *corrective*. The one is in wrath, the other in love; the one is for the good of society, the other for the good of the individual, to recover from the evil which affliction is intended to correct. God may be *angry* with his child, and not *hate* him. He may chastise him with his rod, yet love him with his whole heart. Heb. 12 : 5-11.

IV. This Furnace is designed for the spiritual and everlasting benefit of the Church only.

Even as a Furnace is prepared for the refining of *gold*, so afflictions are appointed for the saints, who are compared to *gold*. Lam. 4 : 2; Job 23 : 10. This intimates to us the high value which the Divine Being places upon his people. They are his jewels, his elect, his chosen, a peculiar people, etc., and it is his will that they should shine in the world, and exhibit the glory and power of his grace. He places not the wicked in this furnace; they are but dross; but the believer, as redeemed by Christ, and regenerated by the Spirit, is the gold, who when tarnished by the world and sin, must be subjected to the refining process; and may we not conclude that the Divine Being sets a high value upon those whose improvement and spiritual advantage he is seeking by such a variety of dispensations? "Whom the Lord *loveth*, he chasteneth."

Did I meet no trials here,
No chastisements by the way,
Might I not, with reason, fear
I should prove a castaway?

Bastards may escape the rod,
Sunk in earthly, vain delight;
But the true-born child of God,
Must not, would not, if he might.

V. This Furnace is proportionate.

That is, he will regulate its heat according to the circumstances of his people who may be placed there. "He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver," etc. Mal. 3 : 3. As a refiner adopts this posture for minute inspection, and that he may quicken the fire, or lower its temperature, as a view of the process may intimate, so the Divine presence, inspection, and compassion, may well comfort the afflicted saint.—— See 1 Cor. 10 : 13; Isa. 43 : 2; 3 : 9; Heb. 4 : 15. The paternal relation he bears to his people will not permit him to deal with them after the manner of the "fathers of our flesh." There can be no caprice, no unwise or intemperate anger in him; he treats them tenderly, Ps. 103 : 8, 9, 13, 14. Compassion is mixed with the severest dispensations, and a wise distinction made between the different members of his family. God often tries the faith and patience of such as have been long under tuition, and are like the elder branches of his household, while he spares the young and inexperienced. To the former, waters of a full cup are wrung out; to the latter is presented the cup of salvation, and a song of praise. For the newly adopted son a fatted calf is prepared, and the Father falls upon his neck, and kisses him, but for the elder brother nothing extra is provided.

VI. The tendency of this Furnace is beneficial.

"I have *chosen thee* in the furnace of affliction." A more proper translation would have been, "I have *tried thee*," etc. By affliction of

various kinds I have proved thy faith, hope, patience, and love. The root of the matter is within thee. MATTHEW HENRY gives this beautiful exposition, "I have made thee a choice one by the good which the furnace has done thee." — Observe,

God has nevertheless chosen some in the furnace of affliction. He has met them there, and by his Spirit has subdued them, and brought them to repentance, faith, and consecration to himself. The furnace of affliction has been instrumental in their conversion. — Many careless sinners weep, resolve, and vow, when they are afflicted, that they will turn to God, but when restored to health, they return to their former course, as the dog to its vomit, etc.

The design of a position in this furnace is to purify the Christian from sin, to wean from the world, etc. Regenerating grace implants in us the seeds of immortality, which require to be cultivated and matured; afflictions are intended to develop those principles, and to fit us for higher enjoyments. And is there not in us at all times a degree of carnality, and earthly-mindedness, to justify all the rebukes of Providence, however severe? *

The believer emanates from this furnace improved, refined. Hence it is said, James 1 : 2, 3; 1 Pet. 1 : 6, 7. David said, "Before I was afflicted," etc. A pious female in the most distressing bereavement was able to say,

"Thou dost but take the lamp away,
To bless me with unclouded day."†

Afflictions exercise the graces of the Christian, Rom. 5 : 3-5.† They preserve from sin. They assimilate the soul to Christ, who was a man of sorrows. They show the frailty of human life, and the vanity of the world, "I have seen an end of all perfection." They teach humanity and sympathy to others. They make very humble, and break the haughty mind, and bring down the lofty thought. "I shall go softly all my years, in the bitterness of my soul; my soul is as a weaned child." They induce a spirit of prayer, "In the day of my trouble, I sought the Lord." In short, God, by placing his people in the furnace of affliction, is educating them for crowns and sceptres, for thrones and dominions, for a place in Paradise, and for a seat at his right hand.

* "The people of God have the same need of affliction as our bodies have of physic, that our trees have of pruning, that gold and silver have of the furnace, that liquors have of straining, that iron hath of the file, and that the child hath of the rod. . . . Affliction scourges us of our rust; and however the wicked, like trees in the wilderness, grow without culture, yet the saints, like trees in the garden, must be pruned to be made fruitful; and affliction does this. God will prune his people, but not hew them down; the right hand of his mercy knows what the left hand of his severity is doing. There is as much difference between the sufferings of the saints and those of the ungodly, as between the cords with which an executioner pinions a condemned malefactor, and the bandages wherewith a tender surgeon binds his patient." — WALL.

† For Anecdotes, showing the benefits of Affliction, see "PEARLS OF GREAT PRICE," by the Author — subject, *Affliction*.

† "The Christian graces, like perfumes, the more they are pressed by affliction, the sweeter they smell; or, like the stars, they appear best in the darkness of trouble; or like the snow (though cold and uncomfortable), yet it warms and nourishes the earth in winter; so the believer is nourished in the winter of affliction. Worldly joy ends in sorrow, but godly sorrow ends in joy; and as it sometimes rains when the sun shines, so there is frequently joy in the saint's heart when there are tears in his eyes." — WALL.

APPLICATION.

1st. Let the sublime design of this furnace induce patience, and submission.

2d. Remember the time of trial is but short. "Weeping may endure," etc. — Called the *day* of adversity — the *hour* of affliction — are but *for a moment*.

3d. What a furnace of infliction awaits the ungodly in the world to come!

THE CHURCH GOD'S BUILDING.

"Ye are God's building." — 1 Cor. 3 : 9.

How great the condescension of God in associating fallen men with himself! admitting them to communion, and investing them with the most exalted privileges! — To have proper views of that condescension, man must feel himself lost, and perishing, and as rescued from that danger by the grace of God, and by that only. — The terms employed by the Apostle in the context, emphatically imply that salvation is by grace. —

I. THE APOSTLE'S DESCRIPTION OF THE CHURCH OF GOD: "*Ye are God's building.*"

The term is figurative, and is used by the sacred writers to show that the Church has been designed, founded, built, adorned, and will be glorified by God alone. See Eph. 2 : 20, 21; Col. 2 : 7; Heb. 3 : 3-6; 1 Pet. 2 : 5. — This Building

1st. *Has a Proprietor.* This is abundantly stated throughout the Scriptures. He is the Proprietor of the site (the world), of the foundation (Christ), of the materials (sinners), of the builders (ministers), of its privileges here, and its ultimate and eternal glory in heaven. "Every good and perfect gift," etc. etc. He is "the Author of eternal salvation to them that believe;" "the Author and Finisher," etc. See 1 Cor. 3 : 16. — This Building

2d. *Has an Architect.* The Architect is God, infinite in wisdom and power. Before this building was commenced there was *intention*, Acts 4 : 28; it is the result of design, Eph. 1 : 11; all things are arranged according to the previous intention and counsel of his mind. — The *site* for the erection of this building is the world. God looked down from heaven, and perceived the awful condition of man, Rom. 8 : 10, etc., and, in his compassion, resolved to save, and to gather the saved together as a holy building reflecting his glory. — As the Divine Architect, he has formed and announced the *Plan* of this building; viz., that Christ should be the foundation, and believers the stones. It was announced immediately after the fall, Gen. 3 : 15; and successively by the Prophets, Isa. 53, etc. — This Building

3d. *Has a good Foundation.* And this foundation is Christ, Isa. 28 :

16, called a "*stone*" to convey the idea of *stability* and *durability*—— and a "*tried stone*," to indicate that it is completely adapted to answer the purposes for which it is laid; a "*sure foundation*," because no attacks of its enemies, no revolutions of time, no concussions of earth, will ever shake or destroy it. It is a *rock* against which the gates of hell can never prevail.—— Christ became the foundation for his people by "*finishing transgression*," etc., by dying in their stead. Their faith rests upon what he did sacrificially. 1 Cor. 3 : 11.—— Consider

4th. *The Superstructure of this Building.* It is composed of materials properly *fitted*, to occupy a place in the Building, described by 1 Pet. 2 : 5.——

(1.) They once had no connection with the *building*, Eph. 2 : 2, 3; Isa. 51 : 1. They were once deeply imbedded in Nature's quarry of sin, guilt, and impotency, and consequently unfit in that state for spiritual building purposes.——

(2.) But by the hammer of God's word, and the energy of the Divine Spirit, they have been detached from the huge mass of rocky hearts and flinty souls; brought from darkness to light, etc.

(3.) By the atoning blood of Christ, by regeneration, Tit. 3 : 5; by sanctification, 1 Cor. 6 : 11, they are fitted for a position in the temple of God; "*Holiness to the Lord*" is the mark by which these stones or materials are known, and this badge is essential.

(4.) Workmen too are employed to build this house. This is apparent from the context. Ministers, Eph. 4 : 11, Deacons, private Christians——missionaries. They preach Christ——they pray, etc. etc.

(5.) The *principles* by which these materials are *cemented* and united together are *faith* and *love*. By the former the soul rests upon Christ the foundation, Isa. 28 : 16. "*He that believeth shall not make haste*;" by the latter, *love*, the materials are united to each other. They "*love as brethren*," and in this Building, they are "*fitly framed together*," and "*built together*," Eph. 2 : 21, 22. Hence the vast importance of faith——of love——of Christian unity:——"*Behold how good*," etc. It is this state of fraternal union that makes Christianity attractive——that makes it resemble heaven——and it will be the grand feature of the Church during her millennium state.

(5.) *The special design of the Erection.* The design is magnificent, and yet it is gracious. It is a "*habitation for God*;" Eph. 2 : 22. What a glorious inhabitant—the Deity! "*God is known in her palaces for a refuge*." "*Behold the heavens, and the heaven of heavens*," etc. And it is also gracious, Isa. 66 : 1. "*This is my rest forever; here will I dwell*." "*The Lord loveth the gates of Zion*," etc.——Observe

(6.) *The Beauty of this Building.* Eloquently described in Ps. 48; Song 6 : 4. Compare the state of the Church by grace with her former state of unregeneracy. See the polished stones bearing the inscription of "*Holiness to the Lord*." See their love—their union—their benevolence to the world. They are adorned with the righteousness of Christ, the robes of salvation, and bear the image of God. Ezek. 16 : 14; Isa. 61 : 10. [Comment on these Scriptures.]

II. THE BLESSEDNESS OF BEING A PART OF THIS BUILDING.

1st. *It is honorable.* It is the most glorious building that ever was erected.—— To be a part of it is honorable. This is evident from Heb. 8 : 1-6. It is to be allied to the glorious Proprietor himself.

2d. *It is advantageous.* The state of a person is decided——he is placed in the Building——he has realized the operations of Divine power, by which he has been changed, and fitted to occupy a place in the temple of God. This produces peace, contentment, joy, hope.—— He has an interest in all the promises——and in all the privileges of this house——and is a participant of all its provisions, as the spiritual banqueting-house. Isa. 25 : 6.

3d. *It is a state of safety.* The Proprietor will never suffer this Building to be destroyed. He ever watches over it, and defends it, Isa. 27 : 3; his everlasting arms encompass it—he is a wall of fire round about it—angels minister to it—all the attributes of God are pledged for its security.——It has withstood many storms, it has received many dreadful attacks, and yet no impression has been produced—no fissure or chasm appears in the building; no, not one of its lofty towers and gilded pinnacles, has been demolished. Its foundations are Divine and immovable.

APPLICATION.

1st. Are you a part of this holy Building?

2d. See the importance of building upon a right foundation, and adhering to the doctrines of Christ as revealed by him. See verse 11.

THE PRIVILEGES OF BELIEVERS, AND THE DESTITUTION OF THE WICKED.

"He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life."—1 JOHN 5 : 12.

HUMAN life is but as a vapor that continueth for a short time, and then passeth away. While the body is daily giving symptoms of decay and approaching dissolution, how important that the soul should possess spiritual life, which is the preparation for, and the very earnest of, eternal life beyond the grave.—— He that hath this life is happy indeed. He can say like the Psalmist, "Because thy loving-kindness is better than life," etc., Ps. 63 : 3. It is better than temporal life with all its luxurious abundance—with all its property immense—with all its honors and dignities—with all its sceptres, crowns, palaces, and regal pomp. *It is better than life.* "He that hath," etc.

I. THE PRIVILEGE OF THE CHRISTIAN: "*He that hath the Son hath life.*"

The word "life" means a state of active existence, the very opposite of death. When it is applied to a Christian, it indicates a

previous state the very reverse of his present one, and that he became the subject of a mighty renovation by the Spirit of God. ——— Consider,

1st. *His previous state.* He had no life. He was dead, and this is the character of all the unregenerate.

(1.) He was *spiritually dead*; that is, all the powers of the soul were dead to God, and his service, Eph. 2 : 1, etc.; 1 Tim. 5 : 6; Eph. 5 : 14.

(2.) He was *legally dead*; that is, in a state of condemnation, having no prospect but the blackness of darkness forever. Rom. 5 : 15, 18, 21; 6 : 23. ——— Notice

(3.) He *had not the Son*; that is, he had no proper knowledge of Christ as the Saviour; he saw not the necessity of such a Saviour; he believed he could save himself; he had no relish for Christ.

2d. *His present state.* "He hath the Son," etc. Having the Son in possession, implies,

(1.) That Christ is *the gift of God*, that he might be the portion of them that believe, John 3 : 16. ——— He came from heaven, became man, lived and died, rose and ascended, not for himself, but for others. As the head does not exist for itself, but for the body, and the stock for the branches; so Christ did nothing, suffered nothing, for himself, but for us.

(2.) That Christ is the *fountain of life*, and the *medium* of its communication to believers. He is the fountain of natural, spiritual, and eternal life, John 1 : 4; 11 : 25; Ps. 36 : 9. He is called *life*, 1 John 1 : 2; he is the "bread of life," for he came down from heaven to give his flesh, that is, himself, for the life, or salvation of the world. John 6 : 48-51. He is the Author of eternal life, Heb. 5 : 9; Col. 3 : 3, 4. He is our life, our heaven, our all, Ps. 16 : 11. ——— Christ is the medium of life and salvation to sinners. ——— It is by his sacrificial death that life is obtained and bestowed. Voluntarily becoming our substitute, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. "Though he was rich," etc. He obeyed the law, and magnified it, by becoming its victim. He turned the weapon of Divine justice from man upon himself. He opened a way by which the sinner may receive a title, and a meetness for eternal life. ——— It is further implied,

(3.) That Christ has been *received by faith*. For that which is here taught is true only of them that believe, and they only have the hope of eternal life. ——— This faith supposes that the sinner has been *awakened* from spiritual death by the quickening influence of the Spirit, by which he has seen his danger, and trembled like the Jailor ——— and that Christ has been revealed to his soul as the Almighty Saviour upon whom he has cast his imperishable spirit for life and salvation.

It is impossible that it should be otherwise. No man can "have the Son," till he has really received him, and that can only be by *faith*. John 1 : 12.

He cannot have Christ, and at the same time that which is opposite to him. See Rom 10 : 3, 4.

He who values and chooses the world as his portion, can have no part in Christ, for it is impossible to serve two masters, etc. Faith in Christ includes a renunciation of all things for his sake, and we shall not otherwise be accounted worthy of him.

(4.) *Having the Son is indispensable.* It must precede having life here, and life eternal, John 17 : 3. As Christ, the gift of God, takes precedence of all other blessings, both in point of magnitude, and in the order of time; so the reception of Christ must take the lead of all the rest. — The branch must be united to the vine, before it can derive life and nourishment from it; and union with Christ must in the order of things precede every other blessing.

(5.) "Having the Son," leads to the possession of life. "He that hath," etc. Then God delights to bestow every spiritual blessing in reward of Christ's obedience. Those who received Christ, are treated as being his brethren, as Pharaoh treated Joseph's brethren because they were his. God hath made a covenant of life with them, through Christ, and given them all things for his sake. 1 Cor. 3 : 21-23.

The privilege of "having life," is a very glorious and comprehensive one. It implies

That believers have become the subjects of a *spiritual life*. They have been raised from the dead, Col. 3 : 1; Eph. 2 : 1; Rom. 6 : 4, 5. The powers of the soul are now awake, and directed to spiritual matters. The world has become vanity and vexation of spirit; and they are no longer conformed to it, but transformed, etc. The understanding is enlightened, the judgment is informed, the will is submissive, the affections centre in Christ and heaven. It is a life of holy liberty, being freely justified by Christ, Rom. 5 : 1; 8 : 1, etc. It is a life of holiness — of peace — of joy — of glorious hope, etc.

But this life is *prospective*. 1 John 5 : 11. It is *eternal life*. The commencement of this life is on earth when a man is accepted in the Beloved. Hence the beautiful statement of Christ, John 4 : 14. Spiritual life here is the glorious, sensible, *earnest* of eternal life in heaven, 2 Cor. 1 : 22; Rom. 8 : 23. These passages intimate the assurance given by the Spirit of adoption to believers of their inheritance in heaven. For as the first fruits were pledges to the Jews of the ensuing crop; and as he that receives the earnest is sure to have the full sum paid him, or the full bargain made good, when the person who gives it is honest and faithful, so the graces wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God, or the believer's spiritual life on earth, are pledges of that abundance and fulness of joy and felicity realized by perfected spirits in glory. — But this spiritual life here, with all its enjoyments and foretastes, is but a handful compared with the full harvest—but a drop from the ocean, etc.

Eternal life in heaven will consist in emancipation from the world with all its conflicts and sorrows—in deliverance from all sin, and all its effects—it will be a life of residence where God dwells, and angels, and perfected spirits, and eternal companionship with them all — a life of inconceivable enjoyment, arising from the communica-

tion of Divine light to the mind,—the explanation of Divine mysteries in creation, providence, and grace, etc. [See on Eternal Life, page 40.]

II. THE DESTITUTION OF THE WICKED: "He that hath not the Son," etc. Observe

1st. *He has not the Son of God for his portion*; and this is the source of his destitution here, and his misery hereafter. To have the Son is to have all that is essential to our spiritual and eternal happiness; to have him not, is to be "without God, without Christ, and without hope in the world."——To have him not, is to be destitute of the title to, the meetness for, and the earnest of heaven.

(1.) Some persons are *wholly indifferent* to having the Son, and speak of it as a matter of no importance. They shut their eyes against the light. So did the Jews, Acts 28 : 27.——So also do modern deists, and many others who are called Christians. They renounce the leading doctrines of the Gospel, because they do not suit their pride and self-sufficiency.

(2.) Some are full of *self-righteous pride*, and will not have the Son except in conjunction with their self-righteousness. Rom. 10 : 3.

(3.) Some are so entranced by sensual and worldly pleasure, that they have no mind for Christ. Having not discovered their sinfulness and wretchedness, and the power of Christ to save, it is no wonder that they should follow the course of this world.

(4.) Some deny revelation altogether, and therefore have not the Son.——And what is the consequence of all such conduct?

2d. *They have not life*. They have not that spiritual life before mentioned.——They have not the hope of eternal life.——This is very evident—

(1.) From the *statements of Scripture*, and the constitution of the Gospel. No one can go to heaven without Christ the way. John 14 : 6 ; 10 : 1 ; 1 Cor. 3 : 11.

(2.) Because they have not the necessary meetness and relish for heaven. "Without holiness," etc. Rev. 21 : 27, and also verse 8. They are unjustified, unsanctified.

(3.) Consequently they have no hope of eternal life, but a fearful looking for of judgment, etc. Rom. 2 : 5, 6 ; 2 Thess. 1 : 7, 8.

APPLICATION.

1st. How great the happiness of the Christian ! He "hath the Son," and "hath life," and this is an ample portion. Everything is Christ's, for he is heir of all things, and if we have him, all things become ours.——Hence David could say, "Thy loving kindness is better than life," and he knew life in its widest extremes, and had reached its loftiest pinnacle. Though his palace was magnificent, his throne glorious, his sceptre mighty, his dominions vast, his subjects numerous, his treasures full, yet he deliberately declares, "Thy," etc. Ps. 63 : 3.

2d. Let the sinner seriously reflect upon his state of destitution. "He that hath the Son, hath life," etc.——No matter what else you have, if you have not Christ, whether it be wealth, or honor, or even the

greatest stock of good works. — All will avail nothing; there will be no real or substantial good in this world, and none in the world to come, without Christ.

8d. Before your natural life is over, receive Christ by faith. Are you sensible of your destitute state, pray for the Spirit's influence to lead you to spiritual life here, and to possess you with the hope of eternal life.

A GOOD HOPE THROUGH GRACE.

"And good hope through grace." — 2 THESS. 2 : 16.

THE believer's life on earth is one of warfare; but he is stimulated to patience and fortitude by the hope of complete and everlasting relief from all his sorrows. — The text is connected with an affectionate prayer on behalf of the Christians at Thessalonica, that they might war a good warfare, and enjoy comfort and hope in all their tribulations. Hence religion is not merely a profession, but the source of spiritual enjoyment. — The prayer itself affords a strong proof among many others of the Divinity of Christ, who could not otherwise hear or answer prayer. It is addressed to the "Lord Jesus Christ," as being equal with God the Father. "Now our Lord," etc.

I. THE GRACE OF HOPE.

Hope is a confidential expectation of enjoying future good. Heb. 11 : 1. *Faith* credits the testimony of God respecting what he has prepared for those that love him, and *hope* expects to enjoy the same in God's good time.

God has been pleased in the revelation of his will to give to his people promises of eternal life. "Life and immortality," etc. 2 Cor. 4 : 17, 18. — If they had no certain prospect of happiness beyond the grave, when they bid adieu to earthly scenes, they would be of all men most miserable. Hope is the cordial of the Christian's life, of which, if he were destitute, life would be a scene of horror and despair. — This hope refers

1st. *To the resurrection of the body*, called the object of hope. "Of the hope and resurrection of the dead," that is, the hope of it. There is ground to hope for it, from the resurrection of Christ. 2 Cor. 4 : 14; Rom. 8 : 11; 1 Cor. 15 : 20. Death shall not always have dominion over us! No! saith the voice from heaven, "The righteous are all prisoners of hope." The time is appointed when the Lord Jesus shall descend from heaven with the shout of the archangel, and the trump of God. Destruction itself shall hear his call, and the obedient grave shall give up its dead. In a moment, etc., the Christian will shake off the sleep of thousands of years, and be caught up, etc. Phil. 3 : 20, 21. "Them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." — This is the object of the Christian's hope; they are represented as "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body."

"Grave—the guardian of our dust!
 Grave—the treasury of the skies!
 Every atom of thy trust,
 Rests in hope again to rise!

"Hark! the judgment trumpet calls!
 Soul—rebuild thy house of clay—
 Immortality thy walls,
 And Eternity thy day!"

2d. *Eternal life, to be enjoyed by both soul and body*, is the object of the Christian's hope. It is called "the hope of eternal life," Tit. 1 : 2; "that blessed hope," Tit. 2 : 18; the "hope of glory," Col. 1 : 27; and "the hope which is laid up for us in heaven," Col. 1 : 5. For all this happiness the Christian hopes, as being the production and preparation of free and gratuitous love. Rom. 6 : 23. "Fear not, little flock," etc. The design of Christ's death and exaltation was to prepare mansions of unspeakable splendor and felicity for his people. John 14 : 2, 8.

3d. This hope implies *certain pre-requisites on the part of those who indulge it*.

(1.) *Conviction of sin*, as that which renders hopeless in the world. That by sin and guilt the soul is separated from God, exposed to his just displeasure, and forever excluded from his favor. — That a conviction of such a state of ruination leads to the inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" — It is absolutely necessary that it should be thus; otherwise it is difficult to conceive how the hope of glory can be entertained, as conviction leads to an interest in Christ, who prepares the soul for the mansions of eternity.

(2.) This hope implies *an experimental acquaintance with the Gospel*, as it is begotten by means of the Gospel. It is called "the hope of the Gospel," because it discovers and promises heaven. Col. 1 : 23. We cannot hope for that in the existence of which we do not believe. — Faith believes all the promises of immortality, and hope anticipates the realization. — He who has this hope, has therefore believed in Christ as the great atoning sacrifice—he has been washed in his precious blood from sin and guilt—he is now clothed with the garments of salvation, as the "meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." — Without faith in Christ, there can be no hope, as he alone has "broken down the middle wall of partition, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers." — You may be charmed with eloquent descriptions of heaven, but if you have no faith, it will avail you nothing.

II. THE EXCELLENCY OF THIS HOPE: "A good hope."

1st. It may be called a good hope in opposition to the *hopes of worldly men*. Their hopes contemplate principally worldly objects, which can never yield solid and lasting satisfaction. "Vanity of vanities." See 2 Cor. 4 : 18.

2d. When compared with the hope of the *Pharisee*, or the *hypocrite*. The foundation of their hope is as unstable as sand. Matt. 7 : 26. — The hope of unrighteous men is founded upon pride, false notions of the Deity, ignorance of the law, etc. — We have heard such characters boast of their goodness, and express their hopes of eternal life, while it is solemnly declared, Rom. 8 : 20, 28; Job 8 : 13-15.

3d. It is a good hope because it is a *lively hope*. — The person who has it is spiritually alive, having been regenerated by the Spirit. 1 Pet. 1 : 3-6. This hope sometimes produces the most lively joy, etc. 1 Pet. 2 : 4. We “rejoice in hope of the glory of God,” Rom. 5 : 2.

4th. It is a good hope because the object of it is an *infinite and eternal good*. — Not the gay and dazzling objects of sense, worldly honor, filthy lucre, or sensual delights, or a Mahomedan paradise; but the pure, spiritual, and immortal felicities of the heavenly world. — Christians, look on the future, survey the enrapturing prospects which revelation exhibits to you as the fruit of the Saviour's sacrifice. For you a kingdom is prepared, etc. For you there has been created the house of God, the building above, etc. You are destined for an inheritance incorruptible, etc., and to be residents of that city which hath no need of the sun, etc. etc. Such are the beautiful figures employed by the Spirit to inspire the hopes of God's people. They are the abodes of purity. Rev. 21 : 27. They are the abodes of intellectual bliss; there they know even, etc. They are the abodes of triumph: the saints shall sit down as conquerors through, etc., shall strike the joyful harp, and wear crowns of gold. They are the abodes of delightful association. Heb. 12 : 22, 23. They are the abodes of life and immortality; sickness shall no more waste, death will no more separate.

Why talk we now of earthly things,
The wealth of empires, crowns of kings,
Or aught below the skies?
Can crowns or sceptres be compared
With that exceeding great reward
On which we fix our eyes?

5th. Because it has a *good foundation*. It springs from Christ, the Rock of ages. — This hope has for its basis the word of him who cannot lie. Tit. 1 : 2. It is founded upon the oath of God. Heb. 6 : 16, 19. — How different from the hopes of the earth! We thought they had a firm foundation, but they have all been scattered to the winds; we placed our hopes in riches, but they made themselves wings — in friends, etc. — in health, etc.; we hoped for reputation, but have been reviled; we hoped, but have been plunged into despair. — Not so with the good hope through grace. God cannot deny himself. It is the “anchor of the soul.” Heb. 6 : 19.

6th. Because it produces *good effects*. (1.) It produces *purity* of heart and life, 1 John 3 : 3. — (2.) It *sustains* the mind in tribulation. Its influence, in this respect, was realized by patriarchs, prophets, apostles, etc. — (3.) It *irradiates* the valley of death. “The righteous hath hope in his death.” Ps. 23 : 4.

III. THE SOURCE OF THIS HOPE: “through grace.”

By “grace” here is meant the free and unmerited favor of God, which is the source of hope and every other blessing. The salvation of a sinner, from the time of his being born again to the period when his soul becomes glorified on high, is invariably ascribed to the grace of God by the sacred writers. — The free and unmerited love of God is the original mover of our salvation, and has no cause superior, to excite or draw it forth; but it arises merely from his own sovereign and gracious will. John 3 : 16, states that this grace or love produced

redemption, to the utter exclusion of all *human merit*, Rom. 11 : 6 ; 2 Tim. 1 : 9.

This good hope must be through grace,

1st. Because man is the subject of *infinite demerit*. What can a condemned prisoner do to merit the favor of the Divine Sovereign ?

2d. Because *Christ alone possesses infinite merit*. All salvation flows through him as the Mediator. He is the only way, and a gracious way, Rom. 5 : 20.

3d. It is evident from the *numerous Scripture statements*—the cautions, the warnings, etc., against all self-dependence. Rev. 3 : 17, 18.

4th. From the *experience of Christians*. The longer they live, the more they see that their hope of heaven springs from grace. Tit. 3 : 3-7.

5th. From the acknowledgments of the redeemed in heaven. Rev. 5 : 9, 10 ; 7 : 10.

A good hope *through grace*. This hope elevates above the demerits of sin. Whatever may have been the guilt, vileness, and wretchedness of the penitent believer, the grace of God can forgive and change him, and possess him with this hope. "Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life."

APPLICATION.

1st. Learn humility. We were perishing, and grace saved us. We deserved wrath, and God gave us the hope of heaven.

2d. Be grateful, and show forth the praises of him, etc.

3d. Live constantly by faith in the Son of God ——— and let hope be in lively exercise to cheer and to support.

REJOICING IN GOD'S SALVATION.

"I will rejoice in thy salvation."—Ps. 9 : 14.

THE minds of the wicked are susceptible of joy from the most trivial causes — causes which the Spirit of God has taught the Christian to estimate as mere "vanity and vexation of spirit." ——— To the enlightened mind the pursuits of earth, and the possessions of the most wealthy, dwindle into insignificance when compared with the value of the soul and its great salvation. ——— If a sinner finds cause for joy in his career of iniquity, the end of which is death, surely the believer has in God's salvation an unfailing source of joy and consolation. ——— Hence this is a wise resolution, "I will rejoice," etc.

I. WHAT DOES THIS SALVATION IMPLY ?

1st. *A knowledge of it*. For no one can ever rejoice in it unless he understands it. Hence Ps. 89 : 10. There will be, (1.) A knowledge of the *necessity of it*, arising from the fallen, guilty, and condemned

state of the human race.—(2.) A knowledge of *the accomplishment of this salvation*, by the coming death, resurrection, and intercession of Jesus Christ. 1 Tim. 1 : 15.—(3.) A knowledge of *the proclamation of this salvation*. To the repentant and believing sinner, Mark 16 : 16, 16. That it is offered to the vilest of the human race—to all who repent, and that without money and without price; and that when received, it will grant pardon to the guilty, justification to the condemned, liberty to the captive, health to the sick, sight to the blind, and, in short, “all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”——It further implies,

2d. That the person who rejoices in it, *has felt his need of it*; otherwise he could not rejoice in it. He has known the plague of his own heart. The Spirit has opened the eyes of his understanding, and discovered to him his guilt, etc. He has felt his helplessness, and perceived and felt the adaptation of the Saviour to his state as a perishing sinner.——

3d. That to rejoice in this salvation, *a person must have an interest in it*; that is, he must “be saved,” otherwise he could not rejoice. The Jailor believed, etc., and he rejoiced, etc. Acts 16 : 34. A person rejoices when his disease departs, when the bloom of health again mantles his cheek, etc. The debtor rejoices when his debts are discharged, etc. The culprit rejoices when reprieved, when he hears the opening of the doors of his prison-house.—And shall not the penitent and believing sinner rejoice? He is saved!——Saved from guilt, and condemnation, Rom. 5 : 1; 8 : 33, 34; Isa. 12 : 1, 2. Saved from the power and dominion of sin—from the power of death, the dominion of the grave, and the vengeance of everlasting fire.—He has an interest in this salvation, and can set to his seal that God is true.

II. WHAT DOES THIS SALVATION PRODUCE? Joy, and rejoicing. “I will rejoice in thy salvation.”

To rejoice is to be glad, to be thankful, to exult and triumph. Luke 1 : 58; 1 Thess. 5 : 16. It springs from the realization of mercy through the atonement; it is the effect of the truth believed through the enlightening influences of the Spirit, and is termed, “joy in the Holy Ghost.” Rom. 14 : 17. The disciples were “filled with joy,” when they believed the Gospel, Acts 13 : 52.

Joy is seldom excited but on some great occasions, and the seasons of religious joy are distinguished by some interesting or extraordinary occurrence. At the preparation for building the temple of Jerusalem, 1 Chron. 29 : 9; at Hezekiah’s passover, 2 Chron. 30 : 25, 26; at the rebuilding and dedication of the city wall. Neh. 12 : 48; at the birth of Christ, Luke 2 : 10–14; at the appearance of the star, Matt. 2 : 10; at the ascension of Christ, Luke 24 : 52.—This rejoicing is over an infinite soul, redeemed by an infinite price, from an infinite death, to infinite joys, realized first here, and then to be realized in an infinite heaven. What a possession! What a prospect! “I will rejoice in thy salvation.”——The believer rejoices,

1st. *In the origin of it*. It is the result of grace, the sovereign goodness and unmerited compassion and favor of God.——Man did not deserve it. He had no equitable title to it. He never solicited it. God beheld him as an outcast, pitied him, and condescended to interpose on

his behalf. John 3: 16. The Gospel is called the "Gospel of the grace of God," Acts 20: 24.

2d. *He rejoices in the procuring of it.* Although that was characterized by suffering, ignominy, and death, yet he rejoices that the Captain of his salvation, Heb. 2: 9, 10. When he sees his Redeemer in the garden and on the cross, he weeps, but they are tears of joy. There he sees his patience and submission; there he sees his courage—his power—his triumph, conquering when he fell. There he sees him bearing his sins—and dying in his stead, etc., 2 Cor. 8: 9.

3d. *He rejoices in the application of this salvation to his soul.* Once he knew nothing about it, or treated it with indifference and contempt.——But when the commandment came, sin revived, and he died. Then he cried, "What must I do to be saved?" Then he became anxious after salvation; and it was as welcome to him as water in the burning desert to the thirsty traveller ready to perish.——He rejoices in the first impressions of Gospel power—in the first dawning of light on his mind—the first touch of the great Physician—the first taste of spiritual liberty.——So that he rejoices,

4th. *In the actual experience of it.* He does not merely profess joy, but he feels it. He has the assurance of pardon, etc., by the witness of the Spirit. "We who have believed do enter into rest."——He has an interest in it, as was said before.

5th. *He rejoices in the glorious properties of this salvation.* In the freeness of it, requiring no qualification, no conditions—in the purity of it, and the power of it, saving him from the power, dominion, and pollution of sin—in the fulness of it, investing with every spiritual privilege, and possessing with every spiritual blessing—in the extensiveness of it, offered to "all nations," preached to "every creature,"—in the perpetuity of it, assuring the soul that he who begins a good work will perform it, etc., and that he who believes shall have everlasting life.

6th. *He rejoices in the prospective consummation of it in heaven.* This salvation concerns his body, which the Saviour will raise and glorify, Phil. 3: 21. Hence he joyfully hopes for this, 2 Cor. 5: 1, etc.——This salvation concerns both body and soul, which will be united, as one glorious being, to enjoy complete felicity forever in heaven.——Salvation is not perfect here; but it will be perfect there, and the Christian anticipates with joy the full harvest—the fruition of hope, and the vision of glory in which faith shall be lost. "Thou wilt show me the path of life," etc. "As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."

APPLICATION.

1st. Religion is not gloomy, but pleasant. It gives joy, and leaves no sting behind.——How mistaken are the carnal men who call it melancholy!

2d. The value of religion is especially seen in adversity. Witness David, Job, Apostles, who rejoiced in suffering, etc. Hab. 3: 17.

3d. See that your joy is well-founded. Let it not be the joy of the hypocrite, nor of the Pharisee. "The triumphing of the wicked is short."

ACCESSIONS TO THE CHURCH.

"We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you." — ZECH. 8 : 23.

THE prophecy in the text and context refers to the conversion of the Gentiles—the great prosperity of Messiah's kingdom.——That kingdom should no longer be confined to one nation, or people, but multitudes in different climates, and the remotest parts of the earth, should submit to Christ. — "Ten men shall take hold out of all languages," etc. This in a measure was verified on the day of Pentecost, and it further implies that the Gospel should ultimately be read and preached in the various languages and dialects of the earth. The word "Jew" may refer to the Apostles who were Jews, and also to other Christian Jews, Acts 6 : 7, of whose skirt *ten men*, or ten Gentiles to one, or very many, should take hold, craving instruction, or direction in spiritual matters, saying, as in the text, "We," etc., or as Ruth said to Naomi, "Whither thou goest," etc.

I. THE NATURE OF THE RESOLUTION: "*We will go with you.*" This implies,

1st. *The abandonment of a previous course of conduct.* Even as the Jews, when converted, renounced Judaism, and the Gentiles their idolatry, so the man who makes this resolve renounces every favorite system and every false way. See this in the case of Paul. He renounced his Pharisaical views, etc. ——— Whatever stands in competition with Christ and fellowship with his Church, is freely surrendered, Luke 16 : 33.

2d. *Regeneration of soul by the Spirit of God.* Unregenerate man is opposed to God and his people. The Spirit destroys this opposition, as well as restores to the Divine image. The Church is composed of the children of God, and men become such by regeneration and adoption. ——— They may have deemed Christians as enthusiasts and fanatics, but now they say, "We will go," etc. ——— Element cleaves to its kindred element, and a regenerated soul pants for association with the regenerated Church. Paul, before his conversion, hated Christians, but afterwards was willing to die for them.

3d. *Compliance with the terms requisite to union with the people of God.* Repentance of sin. Faith in the Sacrifice of Christ, and in him alone. Christ is the door of the Church, John 10 : 9. The Church is composed of believers in Christ; none else have a right to enter. ——— It is also required that a profession of Christ and attachment to his people should be made openly and boldly.

4th. *Actual union with the Church.* No sooner was Saul of Tarsus converted than "he essayed to join himself to the disciples;" and it is said of the Macedonian believers, 2 Cor. 8 : 5. ——— It is the imperative duty of the converted to unite in holy fellowship with the people of God; it was so in ancient times, and it must be so now; to the people of God in their collected condition, as a company of believers, of travellers, of soldiers, of servants, of the flock of the great

Shepherd, the promises of God, in their full, sweet, and glorious import, are made. "We will go with you;" we will enter your ranks; we will own you as brethren, and we desire to be owned by you in return. We agree with you in doctrine, in discipline, etc., and "we will go with you."——The Church should ever be ready to say, "Come thou with us," etc.

5th. *A disposition to co-operate in holy duties.* With you we will maintain the *doctrines* of the Gospel—sustain the preaching of them, and defend them when attacked. We will submit to the *discipline* of the Church, and scripturally exercise it to others.——We will labor according to our gifts, and as the providence of God may direct, in the Church. "We will go with you" to hear with you, to pray with you, and sacramentally to weep with you. "We will go with you" in sympathy, weeping with those that weep," etc.

6th. *Co-operation in promoting the interests of Christ's kingdom.* Satan we will regard as our common foe, and we will join you in every expedition against him; and nothing will be dearer to our hearts than to see our Saviour honored with the conquests of his Church.

7th. *Invariable attachment to God's people and cause.* We desire to go with you in this sense; to be united for life—to go with you not only in sunshine, but also when the Church is beclouded—to partake not only of your pleasures, but also a share of your pains.

Finally. *We will go with you to heaven.* Travel with you till our "eyes shall see the King in his beauty, and the land that is afar off." And it will be a glorious thing for us to sit down with Abraham, etc., to join the general assembly, etc.; to unite with them—to tune our harps, etc. "We will go with you."

II. THE REASON ASSIGNED FOR THIS RESOLUTION: "We have heard that God is with you."

1st. *This fact is established.* We have heard from the Divine word, wherein this blessing is promised and declared. The name of the city shall be Jehovah Shammah, "*the Lord is there.*" See Zeph. 3 : 17 (and numerous passages).——We have heard it from yourselves. You have felt his presence, and been made glad. "The Lord is my helper;" "he is at my right hand," says one. "All men forsook me, but the Lord stood by me," says another.——We have also heard it from others, who observed how your faces shone when you descended from the mount, from others who have heard your conversation, and marked your walk, etc.—

What a blessed thing it is when the Divine presence is so realized, and when God is heard in the language, and seen in the disposition and conduct of his people!——"We have heard."

2d. *For God to be with his people, implies*

(1.) *Presence*, or the manifestation of all his glorious attributes. The Essence is invisible, but the attributes are displayed, *graciously* displayed to the people of God. To sinners they are very terrific, but to saints most delightful. They realize his guiding, protecting, supporting, consoling, cheering, and providential presence.

(2.) It also implies *influence*. Presence, not only for the purpose of

unveiling the moral glories of his nature, but influence as an operating agency, and spiritual communication.

(3.) It conveys the idea of *residence*. Here he *dwells* with man; a resident, not a guest. The Church is the dwelling-place of a perfect and infinite spirit of knowledge, wisdom, purity, consolation, love, joy, heaven.

(4.) It implies *communion*. Here children come to meet a father; disciples to listen to the Master's voice; patients to experience the physician's skill.——How often has God been with his people—in *public worship*,—in the *closet*—in *reading the Scriptures*, in *affliction*, in *temptation*, in *persecution*, in *death*!

3d. *The particular evidences of the Divine presence.*

(1.) When *sinner*s perceive it, and say, "We have heard," etc.

(2.) When *sinner*s are converted, and say, "We will go with you," etc.

(3.) *Spirituality*; separation from the world. God cannot dwell with the wicked.

(4.) *Christian union and brotherly love*; for God is the God of order, etc.

(5.) *Fidelity* to the doctrines and ordinances of the *Gospel*. When Christians earnestly contend for the faith, etc, it is an evidence that God is with them.

APPLICATION.

1st. The glory of the Church is not external or internal decoration, pomp, and grandeur; nor wealth, or great numbers merely; but the Divine presence, and the conversion of sinners in consequence.

2d. Believers are here taught to seek increased communion with God, that sinners may be induced to join themselves to the Lord.

3d. Let the infrequency of this declaration, "We will," etc., humble the Church on account of its want of greater spirituality.

SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD.

"Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you."—2 COR. 6: 17.

THE Apostle points out a very important duty, which, if more extensively regarded, would greatly tend to the purity and prosperity of the Church.——One of the greatest evils, at the present day, with which the Church has to contend, is conformity to the world, v. 14.——Consider,

I. THE WORLD FROM WHICH THE CHRISTIAN IS TO BE SEPARATED.

By "the world" here is meant its principles, its spirit, its customs, and temptations, its smiles and its frowns. These unitedly form a stream or course against which he that would arrive in heaven must

struggle; and from persons having principles inimical to the truth he must be separated.

1st. *The world is under Satanic influence.* "What concord hath Christ with *Belial*?" v. 15, a word which signifies extreme wickedness, and appropriated by the Jews to Satan, who is emphatically "the wicked one," 2 Cor. 6: 15.——The world is his kingdom, Eph. 2: 2; John 14: 30. Sinners are his subjects, and are like him. Can saints associate with them?

2d. *The world is unrighteous.* "Unrighteousness," v. 14; it is filthy; "unclean," v. 17; Rom. 8: 10; 1 John 5: 19; 8: 8-10.

3d. *The world is full of moral and spiritual darkness:* "what communion," etc., v. 14; John 8: 19; Eph. 5: 8, 11.

4th. *It is an unbelieving world.* "Unbelievers," v. 14. Unbelief is founded on ignorance; principally on aversion to God, pride, love of the world, John 5: 44; Matt. 22: 5; Heb. 3: 12; John 5: 10. They trust in themselves and despise Christ.

5th. *It is an idolatrous world.* "Idols," v. 16. Are not the pleasures, the possessions, the honors, the creatures, etc., of this world idolized? Col. 3: 5; 1 John 5: 21.

6th. *It is an infidel world.* "Infidel," v. 15. How this prevails at the present day! And also atheism.——It is not the result of sober inquiry, close investigation, or full conviction; but the slow production of a careless and irreligious life, operating together with prejudices and erroneous conceptions of the nature of the doctrines of the Gospel. Infidelity, in general, is a disease of the heart more than of the understanding; for it always increases as morality declines.

II. THE NATURE OF SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD.

1st. Separation from the world *does not interfere with the natural or civil connections of life.* Relations are not to be abandoned because they are irreligious. 1 Cor. 5: 10. The godly are compelled to have intercourse with those whose ungodly deeds are grievous to them, like Lot, whose righteous soul, etc. 2 Pet. 2: 8.

2d. It does not imply *separation from worldly concerns.* While in the world, we must live, and we are commanded "not to be slothful in business," etc.

3d. It implies *a thorough conviction of the state of the world,* as described, Part I.

4th. *Actual separation from the world.* "Be separate — touch not." With the men of the world as associates, or as companions for life, v. 14; not to resort to the places where they go and sin — as the tavern, the theatre, etc.

5th. *The world must be overcome,* as a most deadly foe, 1 John 5: 5. And the principle of victory is *faith.* Redeemed from this present evil world by faith — faith in Christ — faith of heaven.

6th. It implies *enlightened, believing, and holy conduct.* Is the world under Satanic influence? Believers show that Christ is their Master. Is the world unrighteous? Believers are made righteous by the blood of Christ, etc.——Is it full of darkness? they are light in the Lord. Is it unbelieving? they live by faith. Is it idolatrous? they worship

God alone. Is it an infidel world? they are rooted and grounded in the truth, and earnestly contend for the faith.

7th. Separation from the world is indicated by *devotedness to God and his cause*. The Church is loved, fellowship with God and his people is enjoyed; Christians are his companions, his brethren, etc.; he is travelling with them to heaven; he is united with them in the bonds of holy love, and separate from a corrupt world.

8. This separation is *enforced by many motives*. By the example of Christ, and his Apostles. By the nature of regeneration, which produces opposition to the world. By the nature of our Christian profession. Many have been destroyed by it, as Demas, etc. Our own salvation demands separation from it.

III. THE BLESSED RESULTS OF THIS SEPARATION.

1st. Present and final deliverance from the *evil consequences of worldly association*. 1 Cor. 11 : 32.

2d. *The Indwelling of Deity*, v. 16.

3d. *An interest in God*, and all that he has promised; "and I will be their God," v. 16.

4th. *Divine acceptance and approval*. "I will receive you."

5th. *Paternal love of the Almighty*, v. 18.

THE CHARACTER AND DIGNITY OF CHRISTIANS.

"The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there." — Ps. 87 : 6.

GLORIOUS things are spoken of Zion, the city of God. Glorious promises are made, glorious privileges are given, and glorious titles ascribed to her. Israel is called God's Hephzibah, his crown and diadem, his jewels, his portion and peculiar treasure. Hence he has engraven Zion on the palms of his hands, and written the names of her children in the Lamb's book of life. — A time is coming when the people of God, however despicable now, will be honored by the Divine recognition before the assembled universe. "The Lord shall count," etc.

I. THE CHARACTER OF GOD'S PEOPLE: they are "born" in Zion.

They are the subjects of regeneration, or new-birth, and their spiritual "birthplace" is Zion, v. 5, or in the Church of God. Zion or Sion was a hill or mount in Jerusalem upon which Solomon erected the Temple of God, where he was worshipped, and where he dispensed his mercies, and displayed his glory, v. 2. The Church of God derives its name from that honored place. —

By being "born there," or in the Church, it is necessarily implied,

1st. That this change is *not of a human character*.——It is not effected by human means alone. “It is not by might.”——No one is born a Christian. No one comes into the world with a pure heart, by which regeneration is rendered unnecessary. However great the piety and purity of parents, the child can never resemble them without a Divine change. Piety flows not in the blood, etc. John 1 : 13; 2 Pet. 1 : 23.

2d. This change is *not ceremonial*. It is not effected by baptism; yet some have wickedly declared that we are regenerated by baptism, made children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. But baptism is not the putting away, 1 Pet. 3 : 21. A person may be baptized in infancy, or in riper years, and yet, like Simon Magus, remain in the gall, etc.

3d. This change is not merely *external*, nor does it consist in mere formal service. Some persons have been so preserved from immoralities, that they do not want such an outward reformation as is meant by those who favor this interpretation; yet they too must be born again.——It is possible for a person to become “another man,” like Saul, and yet not be a new man. Ahab humbled himself, and yet he was not truly humble; and Jehu drove on furiously, but not towards heaven.——A man may perform a multitude of duties, and yet have an unholy heart; be honest and fair in his dealings, and yet be an enemy to God. He may be of a generous, and yet not of a gracious disposition; may go through the routine of all religion, and yet have no religion. He may be able to say with the young ruler, “All these things have I kept from my youth up,” and yet want the one thing needful.

4th. It does not mean any kind of *impressions* or *new* revelations; any succession of terrors and consolations; or any whisper, as it were, from God to the heart, concerning his secret love, choice, or purpose, to save a man. Many such experiences have been declared by those who continued slaves to their sins; and Satan, transformed, etc., has done immense mischief in this way.

5th. It is *not merely professional*. Many give themselves to the Church without first giving themselves to the Lord. 2 Cor. 8 : 5. No one can really and comfortably profess religion without possessing it.

But, to treat this subject in a *positive manner*, the *birth* of God’s children is a change wrought by the power of the Holy Spirit in the understanding, will, and affections of a sinner, which is the commencement of a new kind of life, and which gives another direction to his judgment, desires, pursuits, and conduct.——This birth therefore is

1st. *Divine*. This is stated John 1 : 13; James 1 : 18; Eph. 2 : 1; 2 Cor. 4 : 6; 5 : 5. Thus he who gave man his being at first can alone create him in Christ Jesus unto good works. He alone can stamp his own image, and make us partakers of a Divine nature. In the spiritual as well as in the natural world, it is he that brings to the birth, and gives strength to bring forth. To give life to the dead, and to bring a clean thing out of an unclean, is the work of Omnipotence, and the effect of sovereign grace.

2d. It is an *inward and invisible change*. The understanding is an-

lightened—the judgment is informed—the affections and desires are purified—the will is subdued, and subjected to the will of God—the soul is turned from the love of the world and the creature, to the great Creator and his service. This birth is not fictitious, but real; it is the existence of truth in “the inward parts.” See Ezek. 36 : 26, 27. Regeneration cleanses the corrupt fountain of the heart, and demolishes the strongholds of Satan. It is a change from internal wickedness to internal goodness, from enmity to love, from the image of Satan to the image of God.

8d. This change is *universal*, extending to the heart and life. Man is “created after God in righteousness and true holiness.” Not only the mind, but the man is renewed; “old things,” etc. The mind is not only renewed, but there is also a new conversation and course of action. The former is called “newness of spirit,” the latter, “newness of life.” The tree is made good, and its fruit is good. Rom. 6 : 12, 13.

4th. It is a change of *which the subject of it is conscious*. The subject has felt himself guilty, condemned, impure. He has been brought to the cross; has believed in Christ; has found peace, and joy. He hates the practices, etc., which he formerly loved, and he loves the doctrines and commandments which he once abhorred. He *now* loves to associate with the people of God. He has “the witness in himself.”

5th. He who is born in Zion *gives evidence* that he has passed from death to life. It is visible in his conduct—the observer of him perceives the change. How different now from what he once was! —The following are the principal evidences : (1) Hatred to sin. (2) Victory over the world. (3) Brotherly love. (4) Delight in spiritual duties. (5) Exemplary conduct; a life of holiness. (6) Self-loathing, and constant faith in the sacrifice of Christ.

II. GOD'S FUTURE RECOGNITION OF HIS PEOPLE AS BORN IN ZION. “The Lord shall count,” etc.

1st. *God knows his people now, and records their names and deeds in the book of his remembrance.* The book of remembrance, book of judgment, probably refer to the important registers kept by monarchs of the acts of their servants, by which they were influenced in the treatment of them, conferring dignity, honor, and wealth on the faithful, and death in its most terrific forms on the treacherous. In the mind of the Deity, or book of remembrance, the deeds of the wicked are recorded, and especially the names of those who were born in Zion, with all the fruits of their regeneration.* See Esth. 6 : 1, 2; Dan. 7 : 10; Mal. 3 : 16; Rev. 20 : 12.—The names of believers are said to be in the *book of life*. Phil. 4 : 3; Rev. 3 : 5; 13 : 8; 21 : 27; 22 : 19.

* “In the book of life, that register of heaven, kept by God himself, our names are entered, not as born of flesh and blood by the will of man, but as born of water and the Spirit by the will of God; of each person it is written, ‘that he was born there,’ in the Church and city of God. That is the only birth which we ought to value ourselves upon, because that alone gives us our title to ‘the inheritance of the saints in light. In Jesus Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian,’ noble or ignoble, ‘bond or free; but Christ is all, and in all.’ Col. 3 : 11.” —HORNÉ.

2d. *At the day of judgment this Divine recognition shall be made.* That there shall be such a day, and for such a purpose, is abundantly proved by Scripture statements, and from the days of the patriarchs, this subject has interested the Church. "He shall come to be glorified in his saints," etc. 2 Thess. 1: 10; Acts 17: 31; Heb. 9: 27-28; Tit. 2: 13; Matt. 25: 31, etc. What a solemn and awful period! Blessed will they be whom the Lord will then make up as his Jewels!

3d. The Divine Being at this momentous period will have a *perfect knowledge of the characters of all men*, and will make a *distinct separation of them*. Mal. 3: 18; Matt. 25: 32.——The wicked, however great and lofty they may have been here, will be disowned there. When God writeth up his people, the names of multitudes of kings, and heroes, and conquerors, and statesmen, will not be found in the book of remembrance.——The righteous, however mean, base, filthy, and despicable, they may have been accounted on earth, will be gloriously recognized by the Judge of all there.——The Lord will number up at that day, for which all other days were made, all the true children of the Church, and show the eminency and excellency of their characters, and contrast them as "one in Christ Jesus," with all which the world has admired and celebrated in ungodly men.

4th. *This recognition will be public.* God will then exhibit the verity and excellency of Christianity. He will signify to the assembled multitudes his love of his people, and his hand will graciously point to them when he says, "This man was born in Zion; he was not ashamed of her, and I am not ashamed of him," etc.

5th. When the Lord writeth up his people, he will *graciously reward and exalt them*. They were born in Zion—dwelt in Zion, were laborers together with God in Zion, suffered in and for Zion, and now they shall dwell forever in the New Jerusalem. "Come, ye blessed," etc.

APPLICATION.

1st. Be thankful for your spiritual birth in Zion. It is all of grace.

2d. How contemptible is earthly lineage, however dignified, compared with the honorable birth of Christians, who are called "the sons of God"! See verse 4, and contrast with the text.

3d. Anticipate the period of Divine recognition.

CHRIST, A FRIEND.

"This is my friend."—Song, 5: 16.

It is the very essence of true religion to feel that God is ours. To have him for our portion yields the highest comfort, and invests with the greatest wealth in time and in eternity. Christ is the Friend of the Church, and all true believers are interested in his friendship.

I. MAN NEEDS A FRIEND. Human friendship is needful, etc., but this is *spiritual* friendship. He needs a friend,

1st. *As a sinner.* He is in a state of guilt and ruin—the subject of destitution and abject misery. His state, in this respect, is beautifully illustrated by the parable of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10: 30. *He fell among thieves*, to which sin and Satan may be compared. They robbed him of the *Divine image, knowledge, love, communion with God, and happiness.*—They *wounded* him, and made him incapable of service, and rendered him loathsome, etc. They *stripped* him, and left him exposed to the storms of Divine wrath.

Man therefore needs a friend. He is a debtor; he is a prisoner, etc. — Neither men nor angels could save him. —

Christ became his friend. Strikingly illustrated by Rev. 5: 1–6. — He became a *surety*—and died as a *sacrifice*. He sends his Spirit to restore man, etc. He needs a friend,

2d. *As a believer.* Consider his afflictions—his persecutions—his spiritual conflicts with the flesh, the world, etc.—He has to die, and for that he needs a friend.

II. SOME OF THE PROPERTIES OF THIS FRIEND.

1st. *He is a rich friend.* So essentially. “In him dwelleth all the fulness,” etc. He is so *graciously*, Col. 1: 19.

2d. *He is a liberal friend*, James 1: 5.

3d. *He is a tender-hearted friend.* Isa. 63: 9; Zech. 2: 8; Heb. 4: 15. Any wrong done to his people, he considers as done to himself, Acts 9: 4, 5; Isa. 51: 22, 23.

4th. *He is a powerful friend.* Can deliver from all perils—and subdue all enemies. “All power,” etc. Eph. 1: 19.

5th. *He is a faithful friend.* He was faithful to his Father—the “true and faithful Witness,”—faithful to his people. How different from men! “I will never leave,” etc. See John 13: 1; 2 Tim. 4: 17. — He is a friend invariably, in poverty, as well as in wealth, etc. He *never changes*.

☞ Christians, if faithful to death, will enjoy his friendship forever.

III. THE HAPPINESS OF POSSESSING SUCH A FRIEND.

1st. It implies an *interest in him as the Mediator*, and that brings pardon, and peace, and joy.

2d. His friendship is realized by *reposing our concerns* in his hands. “Cast thy burden,” etc.

3d. An assurance of his friendship *inspires the soul with holy courage*. Neh. 6: 11; Ps. 18: 29. “I can do all things,” etc.

4th. It produces *inward satisfaction* and *joyful anticipation*. When a person can say, this house, land, etc., is mine, he thinks himself happy. A Christian can say, God is my friend, and he shall guide me, etc.

5th. It calms the mind in trouble, and renders the soul triumphant over spiritual foes.

APPLICATION.

1st. Is Christ your friend, and such a one to you as has been described?

2d. Let not any sin part you from your friend.

3d. See the wretched condition of those who have no Divine Friend.

THE GOSPEL FEAST.

"A certain man made a great supper and bade many: and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready," etc. — LUKE 14 : 16-20.

WHEN Christ uttered this parable, he was dining at the table of a Pharisee of distinction, in a large company of the same description and character. — One of the company observed what a blessed thing it would be to eat bread in the kingdom of God, or to live in the times of the Messiah, and enjoy the blessings of his reign. — The design of Christ in this parable was to declare that though the remark was a very just one, yet multitudes among them had such mistaken carnal views of the nature of Messiah's kingdom, that when the blessings of it were laid before them, they would dislike and reject them, and make every *excuse* for the rejection of his favors, the effect of which would be their exclusion from the blessings of his kingdom, and the offer of those blessings to the very refuse of mankind, as they esteemed them. — The familiar image of a great supper refers to the intrinsic, inestimable blessings of the Gospel salvation. —

I. THE GOSPEL FEAST, OR SUPPER.

As a Feast the prophet spake of it. Isa. 25 : 6 ; 4 : 1, etc.

1st. *This Feast is necessary.* No one deserves it, but all need it, and grace has provided it. The natural circumstances of man are those of guilt, condemnation, impotency, vile wretchedness, and misery.


2d. *This Feast has been graciously prepared.* By the God of grace. It is "of his own eternal purpose and grace, given in Christ Jesus before the world began." The Gospel comes from God, and he says, "Come, for all things are ready." All the former dispensations were designed to prepare for the great final feast. All the great inspired characters who preceded Christ, the patriarchs and prophets, were sent and employed to collect materials and ingredients for the Gospel table. The prophetic references to Messiah in early days; the promises to Abraham, etc.; the whole Mosaic ritual; the types and ceremonies of the law; the predictions of the prophets, etc., etc., are to be considered as preparatory ingredients of the Gospel Feast, to be put at last, in their mature, refined, complete state, on the Messiah's table, and compose the grand supper of eternal salvation.

Great entertainments upon a large scale, and intended for a vast number of guests, take a long time, and employ many hands in preparation, before the tables are spread, etc. So it was here. The whole series of preceding dispensations were a course of preparation for the evening of the human day; the supper of salvation. But when Christ, the master of the feast, came, the state of preparation was complete; the entertainments fully ready; the tables spread and covered, and nothing remained, but that the guests should take their places, and partake of his bounty.

3d. *This provision is suitable to the wants of the sinner.* — It is quite applicable to his case; and this displays the wisdom of the Man

ter of the feast. Here is a sufficient atonement for guilty man—a full and free pardon—deliverance from condemnation—liberty for the captive—light for the blind—peace and comfort for the distressed—strength for the weak—victory for the tempted—and hope of heaven for the outcast. Let the hungry, thirsty, diseased sinner come to this feast, and he shall find suitable blessings for his wants.

4th. *The provision of this feast is abundant.*——It is not like earthly provisions, which are soon exhausted by expenditure. The Paschal Lamb; the bread of life; the wine of the kingdom; the water of life; the meat indeed, and the drink indeed, shall never be exhausted. Our great High Priest has obtained an *unchangeable* priesthood. “He ever liveth to make intercession for us.” “In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” “We are blessed with all spiritual blessings,” etc.——Look at his *atonement*, and see the abundance of the provision. “Behold the Lamb of God,” etc. “I am come,” etc. John 10 : 10——Look at the doctrine of *divine influence*. The Holy Spirit with all his enlightening, quickening, saving, and comforting power.——Look at those *promises*, suspended like clusters of richness and glory from the cross, the tree of life, whose leaves, etc. “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off.” The good people under the Old Testament tasted them like a few premature palatable grapes, at the early part of the vintage, but when the great Lord of the vineyard came, the promises hung in all the richness of *ripe clusters* of pardon, acceptance, and salvation, ready for use and enjoyment. Before it was said, Zech. 13 : 1. When Christ came it *was* opened. John 7 : 37.

 What a privilege to have an abundance of that which we absolutely need and desire!——A miser loves gold, and eagerly pants for it, but he cannot have access to an inexhaustible mine. The epicure loves delicacies, but he lacks abundance.

5th. This feast has been *provided at an infinite expense*. What did it cost the Saviour ?

6th. Nevertheless *it is freely offered*. What is the Gospel but a system of grace and mercy to sinners, freely offered. It is “by grace ye are saved.”——We are not obliged to get rid of our characters as sinners, before we can hope for acceptance; for “this is a faithful,” etc.——We are not to weigh ourselves, and to determine how bad we are, how guilty, how depraved, and whether we have sinned so far as to consider ourselves past all hope; “for all manner of sin,” etc. “He is able,” etc. Nor to stay till we have made ourselves new creatures and new characters, and have got a better heart;—“A new heart will I give unto you.” We are not to sit and pore over ourselves to discover any good qualities to recommend us to Christ. “Him that cometh,” etc. “Ho every one,” etc. And we are not to burden and harass ourselves with attempting to collect or procure anything like an equivalent for the blessings accepted. “The gift of God,” etc. All the language of Scripture runs in this strain: “*I give*,” “*I bestow*,” “*accept*,” “*receive*.”

II. THE INVITATION GIVEN TO COME AND PARTAKE OF THE FEAST. God wills the happiness of his creatures; and nothing can give sub-

stantial happiness but a participation of this Gospel supper. Hence he says, "Come, for all things are ready."

1st. *This invitation is given ministerially.* Christ as a minister gave the invitation—Apostles—ministers. "He gave to some apostles," etc., Eph. 4 : 11; he has chosen human instruments; they are to declare the whole counsel of God in reference to fallen man, and to exhibit to them the suitability, abundance, etc., of the Gospel supper—in inviting them to come. "We have this treasure," etc.

2d. *This invitation is to be given to sinners*—the Gospel is to be preached to every creature. The Jews were the first objects of invitation—and then the Gentiles. "The same Lord over all is rich unto all," Rom. 10 : 12-13. All are guilty, condemned, and starving. Convince them of their need, invite them to come.

3d. The design of the invitation is *the compliance of the sinner.* "Come." What is meant by coming to the feast? It bespeaks a *sense of the necessity and value* of the blessings.——Coming implies an *advancing mind towards the blessings.* This is beautifully expressed, "Look unto me," etc. "As Moses," etc. As the dying Israelites were cured by looking at the brazen serpent, we see in them a type of the advances of the mind towards spiritual blessings.——It implies *persevering application.* To accept an invitation to a feast is actually to come and knock at the door for admission to it, and this is, from the nature of the case, connected with acceptance. "Ask," etc., John 4 : 10. Coming is asking, applying for the blessings, putting in an humble claim for them, pleading the nature of the relief, the promises, the grace of the Gospel. It is faith in Christ.

III. THE REJECTION OF THIS INVITATION. "And they all with one consent," etc. This rejection arises

1st. *From the depravity of the heart.* It is opposed to that which is spiritual.——"The carnal mind," etc. "The natural man," etc.

2d. *It arises from ignorance.* Ignorance of the need of such provision—of the rich value, suitability, abundance, and blessed effects of such provision.

3d. *The mind is pre-occupied with other things,* to which it gives a decided preference. "The first said, I have bought," etc., the business of the world—love of the creature, etc. The mind idolizes these things, regards them as supreme, while the glorious and substantial realities of the Gospel are rejected. Awful infatuation!——How many act in the same way! some plead youth, etc. etc.,——some intend to come shortly, etc.

4th. Such excuses frequently end in final rejection, and absolute loss of Gospel blessings.

5th. And such rejection will incur the displeasure and wrath of the great Master of the feast. See v. 21, 24.

APPLICATION.

1st. Admire the love of God in appointing and inviting to such a feast.

2d. See wherein the whole essence of the Christian life may be said

to consist. In a constant series of applications for Gospel blessings, as the free and sovereign gifts of God, and acceptance of them over and over, day by day.

3d. The dreadful consequences of rejecting the Gospel, should cause the sinner to tremble.

THE ADVANTAGE OF SEEKING THE LORD.

"But they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." — Ps. 34 : 10.

THIS Psalm might be properly styled, The good man's song of triumph. It is full of gracious truths calculated to cheer and stimulate to fortitude all who mourn in Zion. — None of Christ's people are destitute of the Divine care. However feeble, unworthy, etc., they may be, God cares for them, and they shall not want any good thing.

I. THE CHARACTER HERE SPECIFIED: "*They that seek the Lord.*"

1st. They have been given to *see and feel the necessity of seeking the Lord.* — The sinner is "lost" and he has lost God; he has hidden his face, in anger, from the sinner. They that seek the Lord are sensible of this; like the publican — like the prodigal, Luke 15.

2d. *They have sought the Lord in the appointed way.* "Repent and believe the Gospel." They have truly repented of sin. — They have come to God through the great Mediator. — They have earnestly prayed for the bestowal of mercy to pardon and justify, and their faith resting on Christ, their petitions have been answered. — Many seek the Lord, yet not in the appointed way; but in a way of self-righteousness, and dependence upon their own doings; but such shall never find him. Jesus is the only way. — The real penitent disowns every competitor with Christ.

3d. *Seeking the Lord is a constant duty.* It is the business of the whole life; for to seek God is to solicit his direction, to petition his favors, and to depend upon him as our help and portion. To seek the Lord is to secure for life and for eternity the Divine favor. Hence it is preferred to every other object, Ps. 24 : 6; Ps. 73 : 25. Hence the believer loves to seek him in the Scriptures — in the closet — in social prayer — in public worship — in Christian fellowship — in the ordinances of the Gospel, particularly the Lord's supper.

4th. *They seek him with earnestness and diligence.* The whole heart is engaged. The good which they covet being infinite, they are not slothful. Ps. 119 : 10; Jer. 29 : 13.

5th. *They seek him depending upon Divine Influence.* Rom. 8 : 26.

II. THE ADVANTAGE OF SEEKING THE LORD. "*They shall not want any good thing.*"

The Lord has promised many good things to his people; indeed the Scriptures are full of them; and all such gracious arrangement indicates

the wonderful grace of God in providing so abundantly for us. Hence the Psalmist says, Ps. 31 : 19 ; 84 : 11 ; Matt. 6 : 33.

What may appear "good," and good for us according to our judgment, might not be so to the Divine mind. We desire things which are agreeable to flesh and blood, and frequently have no higher motive; we are shortsighted and ignorant. — God sees the cause and effect, the end from the beginning, and he alone can best direct and provide for us. This is the privilege of Christians, that while incapable of judging for themselves, their Father in heaven is infinitely wise and good to manage for them. If they can bear prosperity without injury, they shall have it. If abundance should induce them to forget God, he will reduce them. His infinite mind knows what will conduce to our real welfare, and he will act accordingly. Observe,

1st. They shall not want any good thing connected with *their salvation or acceptance with God*. All the blessings they need are treasured up in Christ, and will be freely bestowed. Pardon in abundance — complete justification — all the privileges of adoption — all the influence of the Spirit. Do they need mercy, let them go again to the fountain. The Saviour ever liveth to make intercession for them.

2d. They shall not want any good thing connected with *Divine Providence*. They are the special objects of Divine care. God appoints the bounds of their habitations, supplies all their wants, guards them from danger and evil, and preserves them unto the day of salvation. See Ps. 25 : 12 ; 32 : 8 ; 1 Tim. 4 : 10 ; read Ps. 34 : 8-10, 20.

3d. They shall not want any good thing necessary for their *protection and guidance* through the wilderness of this world. Are they not surrounded by many dangers, arising from secular engagements, from wicked and designing men, and from the Great Adversary of souls ; — Who is sufficient for these things ? — But God will defend them. Hence Ps. 90 : 1, 2 ; Isa. 54 : 17. The power of God's grace ; his presence by his Spirit ; his watchful care by the ministration of angels (v. 7 of this Psalm), will uphold his people from all the attacks of their enemies ; see ver. 16, 21.

4th. They shall not want any good thing to *comfort them in darkness and trouble*. — Are they in spiritual darkness ? They shall have the light of God's countenance. Ps. 11 : 7 ; Ps. 34 : 15. Are they in affliction ? read ver. 19, and Isa. 41 : 10. Are they full of fear ? read ver. 4, 5. Are they exposed to "troubles" of a personal, domestic, and relative character ? read ver. 17. Do they mourn on account of sin ? read ver. 18.

5th. They shall not want any good thing in reference to *communion with God*. They may go to his throne bodily with the assurance that they shall meet him there to dispense unto them mercy and grace, etc. Read ver. 6, 15, 17.

6th. They shall not want any good thing, as it respects *support in death*. Read ver. 22 ; Ps. 23 : 4 ; Heb. 2 : 14, 15.

7th. They shall not want any good thing to *secure their safe arrival in heaven*. 2 Pet. 1 : 11 ; Ps. 73 : 24.

APPLICATION.

1st. Learn to trace all this goodness to its proper source. It is through grace; it has the infinite love of God for its spring. God has given you his choicest gift, even Christ, therefore the inferior ones will not be withheld. Rom. 8: 32.

2d. As nothing human can ever become a substitute for the Divine care, constantly live in its enjoyment. Avoid sin, that it may not be taken away from you.

3d. How great must be the poverty and wretchedness of the sinner! He is destitute of all these *good things*.

CHRIST THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE.

A METAPHORICAL SKETCH.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman, seeking goodly pearls: Who when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." — MATT. 13: 45, 46.

JESUS CHRIST was a wise and impressive Teacher. — The parables which he delivered, are replete with instruction, and calculated to rivet important truths on the mind. — The pearl in Scripture is used to indicate the precious truths of the Gospel, etc. Matt. 7: 6; also Christ himself, as in the text; and the glory of heaven. Rev. 21: 21.

I. Pearls, as naturalists say, have a mysterious origin; they are the wonderful production of a Shell Fish, of the oyster kind, found chiefly in the East Indies, and called Berberi. The Shell, which is called the Mother of Pearl, at a certain time of the year, opens itself, and takes in a certain quantity of dew, as seed, after which they enlarge, till they bring forth the pearl.

So the origin and birth of Christ are wonderful and mysterious. God manifest in the flesh, is the admiration of angels. A virgin (the Mother of this Pearl, according to the flesh), being overshadowed with the Holy Spirit (which is compared to dew, Hosea 14: 5), travailed in birth, and brought forth Christ, the Pearl of great Price. Luke 1: 35.

II. Those that would find Pearls, must search diligently for them, and encounter many dangers by diving into the sea, etc.

And those who would find Christ the Pearl of great Price, must search and seek after him diligently, as for hidden treasure; and they must resolve to pass through all the troubles and difficulties connected with the profession of Christ.

III. It is not an easy thing to find Pearls; they are generally found on rocks submerged in deep water; and it requires considerable skill in those who dive for them to discover them.

It is no easy thing to find Christ, and obtain a real saving interest in him. This difficulty arises from the pride of the heart, which revolts

at being stripped of all its pretensions to self-righteousness. The requisitions of the Gospel are too self-denying, too mortifying for the sinner. He will not stoop to them. Besides, he has never dived into his own heart to perceive his wretchedness, nor into the Scriptures to perceive Christ's glory.

IV. Pearls are very valuable. "The richest merchandise of all," saith Pliny, "and the most sovereign commodity throughout the whole world, are these pearls." And he speaks of one pearl that Cleopatra had, which was valued at £80,000 sterling. The Persian Emperor had one worth £110,000; and Philip II. of Spain, had one valued at 144,000 ducats. They have ever been highly valued, and men would part with all to possess them.

Christ is of inestimable value, and may well be called the Pearl of great Price. The worth and excellency of Christ, far exceed the riches of both Indies. He is the rarest Jewel the Father hath in heaven and earth, more precious unto believers than rubies, and all that can be desired, cannot be compared unto him. What Job says of the value of wisdom, is strictly applicable to Christ. See Job 28 : 15-19. — They that have Christ have enough; they have the true riches, the greatest prize; they are rich for time, for death, and for eternity. This Pearl of great Price invests them with infinite and everlasting wealth, dignity, and glory.

V. Pearls possess a splendid brightness, for which reason the Greeks call them *μαργαρίτης*, shining in splendor. Their beauty is as much within as without.

Christ is beautiful, fair, and shining. His glorious beauties, his splendid brightness, surpass the glorious splendor and brightness of the sun shining in his strength. "He is the brightness of his Father's glory," etc. Heb. 1 : 3. He is the light of the world — the light and glory of heaven.

VI. It is said that pearls possess medicinal value; being an antidote to poison, and melancholy, and tending to preserve bodily strength.

Christ possesses healing and strengthening power. There is no cordial so rich and efficacious to the wounded soul as Christ. The power of his sacrifice and Spirit revive immediately the contrite ones. We are strengthened with all might by his Spirit in the inner man. By him we destroy the poison and power of sin and Satan.

VII. Pearls are so firm, strong, and compact, that fire cannot consume them, nor ordinary strength break them.

Christ is called a Stone, a tried Stone, and sure Foundation. No fire can consume him; no atheistical, infidel, or Satanic power can break or injure him. The gates of hell shall not prevail against him.

VIII. Pearls are a rich ornament, and those who bear them are accounted the honorable of mankind.

Christ is the believer's richest ornament. Those who are adorned with this Pearl, are the most renowned and honorable ones in the world. The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor. Prov. 12:26. Religion dignifies man. — It has also a friendly influence over secular affairs. It would be cruel to intimate that every instance of failure in trade, originates in vice, but it may be said with propriety, that the gene-

ality of these deficiencies, even in good men, are not pure afflictions; but have been caused by the neglect of some of its duties, or the violation of some of its properties. Real religion makes a man punctual, and diligent, and economical; it makes him liberal; and he that soweth plentifully shall reap plentifully. Religion saves him from expensive vices and amusements; it raises his character by the exercise of the moral virtues, and gains him the confidence of his fellow-creatures; it contributes to his health, and to the improvement of his understanding, and thus helps him both to judge and to execute; it secures him the favor of Providence; and "the blessing of God maketh rich and addeth no sorrow;" it "has the promise of the life," etc.

IX. Notwithstanding the excellence and value of pearls, yet many are ignorant of them, and many esteem them no more than pebbles. Swine tread them under their feet.

The Lord Jesus Christ, though so precious as to be adored by saints and angels, is despised and rejected by men of the world, who have their portion in this life. They see no form nor comeliness in him. The eyes of their understanding are darkened.

X. Pearls are called *Uniones* by the Latins, because they are found one by one, or one at a time.

So Christ is singular; there is but one Christ the Saviour, one Mediator between God and man. 1 Tim. 2 : 5. It is the "one pearl of great price," and there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. Acts 4 : 12.

But though the glory and excellency of Christ as the Saviour are admirably set forth by the figure of the text, yet observe the following *Disparity*.

I. Pearls have an earthly origin.

Jesus Christ is the Lord from heaven.

II. Pearls are of a perishing nature; they may be defaced, broken, dissolved, and come to nothing.

Christ is durable. This Pearl of great Price can never be spoiled or dissolved. Nothing can diminish his beauty or glory. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.

III. Men may find a rich and precious pearl, and yet may remain miserable. Riches may prove a bane to them.

He that finds this Pearl can never be miserable. He supplies all the wants and necessities of believers. He makes them rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. "All things are yours."

APPLICATION.

1st. Bless God for bestowing his chief and best Pearl upon you.

2d. Be willing to part with all for the possession of this Pearl. Go and sell all that you have. Surrender the world, with all its fascinations and pleasures, your self-righteousness, etc. etc., to possess this invaluable gem.

3d. See the folly of those who prefer earthly vanities to Christ the Pearl of great Price. Death will soon cause them to surrender all that they idolize on earth, and then they will lack the only substantial wealth — Christ, the Pearl of great Price.

THE SAINT CROWNED BY THE CHIEF SHEPHERD.

"And when the chief shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeeth not away."—1 Pet. 5:4.

THE Scriptures abound with the most beautiful and striking metaphors, which are designed to rivet the most important truths on the mind.—— Thus the Saviour is described as a *Shepherd*, his people are spoken of as a *flock*; the ordinances are compared to *green pastures and still waters*. The influences of the Spirit are spoken of as rain or dew; the withholding of those influences, as the shutting up of the heavens; the glorious effects of those influences, to the flowers, the cedar, and the myrtle; the opposite vices and degradations, to weeds, briars, and thorns. The people of Israel are compared to a garden, walled around — their produce to grapes; their unjust oppressors and persecutors to beasts of prey.

The preceding verses contain exhortations given to ministers of the Gospel—the under-shepherds of Christ's flock—to perform the various functions of their office cheerfully, faithfully, and disinterestedly; and the Apostle endeavors to stimulate to such conduct by the second advent of the chief Shepherd. See text.

I. THE CHARACTER HERE GIVEN TO CHRIST: *He is the "chief Shepherd."*

This is one of the most common characters given to him in the Scriptures, and it is one of the most endearing.——The character of a shepherd now is far less respectable than it was in early ages. Then much of the wealth of great men consisted in flocks; and the richest men were shepherds, as Abraham, Isaac, etc. Abraham was "very rich." See the riches of Jacob, by the present which he made to his brother Esau; and yet he watched his flock by day and by night.——The term shepherd has been considered the highest eulogy which could be conferred. Thus Cyrus was called God's shepherd, Isa. 44:28. The priests of the Old Testament, and the ministers of the New, are distinguished by this honorable appellation.

1st. He was *divinely appointed to this office*. Ezek. 34:23; he is called God's shepherd, Zech. 13:7. He does his work and shares his glory.

2d. For this office *he was eminently qualified*. He is called the "good Shepherd," John 10:11. His kindness and love are unexampled. See Isa. 40:11.

3d. *This Office is pre-eminent*. He is the "chief Shepherd;" for others also sustain the office of Shepherds. This honor have all his ministers, whom he raises up, and commissions, and qualifies, and makes successful.—— Many have overlooked the supremacy of this chief Shepherd——and have become lords over God's heritage.

4th. His flock is *destined to be rich and numerous*. Called "the Shepherd of souls," 1 Pet. 2:25, which, when saved by his grace, etc., are

invaluable. He is called the "Great Shepherd," Heb. 13:20. We should consider him a great shepherd who had a million of sheep; but Christ has an exceeding great number out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues; and each of them is worth more than a thousand worlds.

His flock has been purchased by his blood. See Acts 20:28.

He gathers them together, calling them into his fold, the Church, from the dark mountains of sin, from the beggarly elements of this world. Luke 19:10; John 10:16. This he does by the influence of his word and Spirit, whereby he makes the lost sheep to hear his voice, and to return, 1 Pet. 2:25, and that which particularly attracts them is his death, John 12:32. Hence they are separated from the world — are a holy flock. — The chief Shepherd has put his mark upon them, Heb. 2:11.

5th. *He feeds his flock.* Isa. 40:11. We read of "green pastures," and "still waters," ever verdant, ever pellucid, ever flowing. These mean his word and ordinances. He himself is the food of his people; they eat his flesh and drink his blood, John 6:53, that is, his own blessed sacrifice is that to the mind, which food is to the body; it affords nourishment, strength, and satisfaction, to the soul that receives it.

6th. *He guides and preserves his flock,* John 10:3, 4. — He watches over them, and keeps them from being destroyed by ravenous beasts. He brings them to the shade in times of scorching heat; in times of persecution and afflictions, he finds out an asylum for them.

"Tis there with the Lambs of thy flock,
There only we covet to rest;
To lie at the foot of the rock,
Or rise to be hid in thy breast.

"Tis there we would always abide,
And never a moment depart,
Concealed in the cleft of thy side,
Eternally held in thy heart."

II. THE SECOND APPEARANCE OF THE CHIEF SHEPHERD. "*When he shall appear.*"

Christ has once appeared in this world as a Saviour to put away sin, etc. When he died on the cross, rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven, he established his kingdom in this world. — To ascertain the sublime results of that establishment, and to proclaim them to the universe, he frequently intimated, during his earthly sojourn, that he would come again in splendor and majestic glory.

1st. *He shall certainly appear the second time.* It is clearly stated in Scripture, Jude 5:14, 15; John 14:2, 3; Matt. 25:31; Acts 1:11; 7:31; 1 Cor. 5:10; 2 Thess. 2:7: etc.

2d. *His second appearance is necessary.* On the part of Christ it is so—as a recompense to him for his previous abasement, Phil. 2:6–10. On the part of his people it is so. Their salvation is to be consummated—they are waiting for their coronation—for their abundant entrance, etc. On the part of the world it is so: for they have despised and rejected him, they have poured contempt on his kingdom—they have murdered his people. Rev. 6:9, 10.

3d. *His second appearance will be glorious.* How great must be the glory attendant upon the appearance of God! No one can conceive it; no one can describe it; and we can only learn it from the Scriptures. He will then display all the glory of the divine attributes. — The heavens shall bow, and the earth shall shake, at the manifestation of his glory! Thus it is described, Ps. 50 : 1-6; 2 Pet. 3 : 10; Dan. 17 : 9; Rev. 1 : 7. — How different this from his first appearance! Then his birth was mean, etc.

Oh! how unlike
The babe at Bethlehem! How unlike the man
That groaned on Calvary! — Yet he it is,
That man of sorrows! Oh how changed! What pomp!
In grandeur terrible all heaven descends!
And Gods, ambitious, triumph in his train.

4th. *His appearance will be judicial.* The righteous and the wicked will then be arraigned, and judged according to the deeds, etc. He is ordained to be the judge of quick and dead. He will ascend the throne, etc., etc.

III. THE REWARD HE WILL THEN DISPENSE TO HIS PEOPLE. “*Ye shall receive a crown of glory,*” etc.

Hence the appearance of the chief Shepherd will be *gracious*. He will raise and glorify their bodies; he will complete their happiness; separate them from sinners, and forever ally them to himself, to angels, and to perfected spirits.

1st. *They shall receive a crown of glory.* A crown adorns the head of the conquerors and potentates of the earth. It is the highest object of human ambition. The reward of believers in heaven is called a crown, a crown of life, etc.

It is the emblem of adornment and joy. So it is used, Song 3 : 11; Ezek. 16 : 11. Such will be the beauty and joy of the Church, the bride of Christ, when he shall place the crown on her head. Then shall she shine more glorious than the sun.

It is the emblem of a kingdom and dominion. They shall be kings and priests, etc. They shall have thrones, sceptres, and kingdoms, and shall reign with Christ, the King of kings, forever and ever. James 2 : 5.

It is the emblem of victory. In the ancient games, conquerors were crowned, 1 Cor. 9 : 25.

It is the emblem of honor, splendor, or dignity, Lam. 5 : 16. The crown has fallen from our head; but Christ will place upon it the *crown of righteousness*, which will be more than *paradise regained*. — It is the emblem of holiness. The Jewish high-priest wore a crown, on the forepart of which was a plate of gold bearing this inscription, “Holiness to the Lord.”

How comprehensive the expression, “crown of glory!” Not of thorns, like Christ’s on the cross—not of herbs or flowers, not of cares, like all earthly crowns—not of blood, resulting from the shedding of it — but a crown of righteousness, honorably purchased, and bestowed upon righteous persons. — It is the pledge of the believer’s eternal rapture, and shall be the everlasting reflection of Christ’s glory.

2d. *It is imperishable.* It shall never “fade away.” Not like the

withering Olympic crowns. Even gold will perish. All earthly things, pursuits, relationships, etc., will fade away.——But this is an incorruptible crown, 1 Cor. 9 : 25. No length of time will put a period to the dominion of the saints, or tarnish the lustre of their diadems; for when the kingdom is given to the saints of the Most High, they are to reign forever and ever.

APPLICATION.

- 1st. The saints are not such fools as the world accounts them.
- 2d. Such vast prospective glory is the result of grace.
- 3d. Live and act in expectation of this gracious reward.

THE INVITATION OF MOSES TO HOBAB.

“And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel, the Midianite, We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you. Come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.”—NUMBERS 10 : 29.

THE tendency of true religion is to destroy selfishness, and to produce love. By this, all true Christians will be distinguished. This was the character of Christ, and they have learned of him. Having tasted that the Lord is gracious, they wish others to realize the same. Being convinced that all on earth is unsatisfying, they are looking to heaven for a more enduring substance; and they would have others to be like-minded. Of this character and disposition was Moses, as the text strikingly indicates.

Hobab was the son of Jethro, or Raguel, or Reuel, and brother-in-law to Moses, as he married Zepporah, the daughter of Jethro, who appears to have had two names, Ex. 2 : 18, compare with ch. 3 : 1.——From the text observe

I. THE PEOPLE OF GOD ARE TRAVELLING TO THE HEAVENLY CANAAN.

1st. *The place itself.* Moses and the Israelites were proceeding to the conquest of the promised land. “We are journeying unto the place,” etc. We indeed have no such place to go to as Israel had, but we have a better country, even a heavenly one, of which Canaan was a type, and to that glorious country all true believers are travelling.

It is a land of rest. So Canaan was from all the toils of the wilderness. And heaven will be a rest from all the conflicts with sin and all spiritual foes—from all the trials arising from affliction, poverty, death, etc.

It is the place of purity. There are no fallen spirits there; no depraved hearts. They are all like God. It is the habitation of God's holiness; Rev. 21 : 27.

It is the place of unbounded wealth. Canaan was celebrated for great fertility and abundance, Deut. 8 : 7-9; 11 : 10-12——Christians

have in heaven an inheritance, a crown, etc. etc., an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. See the description in Rev. 21 : 22, etc.

It is the place of unceasing enjoyment. The sun will never go down—the crown will never fade, etc.

It is freely given, “I will give it you.”——“It is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

2d. *The Journey.* “We are journeying,” etc. Their journey proceeded from *Mount Sinai*, where the law was given. They had been at that place.

(1.) This journey commences by *conviction of sin*, produced by the application of the law to the conscience of the sinner by the Spirit. He trembles at the foot of Sinai.

(2.) The convictions of the law *drive him to the Cross of Christ*, where by faith he is forgiven and accepted in the Beloved.——There he is endued with the Spirit of a Christian pilgrim, and from that cross he hopes for a kingdom everlasting. There he begins to run the race that is set before him, looking unto Jesus, etc.

(3.) This leads to union with God’s people, the company of heaven-bound travellers.

(4.) It implies advancement in spirituality, etc. etc.

(5.) It implies that they have God for their Guide, going before them, providentially and graciously, in a pillar of cloud by day, etc. Ex. 33: 14.

(6.) It terminates at death, the end of the race—the close of the day of life—the cessation of the Christian warfare; and it is followed by an abundant entrance, etc.

II. IT IS THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS TO INVITE OTHERS TO JOURNEY WITH THEM. So Moses acted.

He gave Hobab a kind invitation to cast in his lot with the people of Israel, promising to “do him good.” He tells us on *what grounds* they had to expect good things. “We are not going on an uncertainty, after we know not what, nor yet like marauders, for the sake of plunder; but we are journeying to the place,” etc.——Moses pathetically renewed his invitation, ver. 31, and promises that he should fare as they did, ver. 32.——Observe

1st. Christians have *divine authority* to invite others to go with them. “The Spirit and the Bride say, Come.”

2d. They are *deeply affected* with the consequences of walking in the *broad way* that leadeth to destruction.

3d. They are aware of their own responsibility; for they are the lights of the world, laborers together with God. They must give an account of their stewardship.

4th. They therefore use all means in their power to save men. They invite again and again—the members of their family, their friends, etc. “Knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord, they persuade men,”—by personal entreaty—by holy example. They say to the young—to the old, “Come thou with us,” etc.

III. THE REASONS ASSIGNED FOR A COMPLIANCE WITH THIS REQUEST. These are two.

1st. *The promise of mutual good.* "We will do you good." Christians do good, especially to the household of faith, by encouragement, sympathy, instruction, prayer, distributing to the necessity of saints.

2d. *The Divine regard for the Church.* "The Lord hath spoken," etc. Hence the numerous declarations of his love to the Church—his watchful providential care—his exceeding great and precious promises of support here, and glory hereafter.

The *good* things which he has spoken *do not relate to the present world.* If they did, many would be willing to go who now are not disposed. The blessings sought by Christians are far superior to any of these, as the fruits of Canaan were to the briers of the wilderness. All things here are mixed with sorrow, but those in prospect are without alloy. Earthly things are given sparingly, but this "*good*" is unbounded. "The things that are seen," etc.

Again: though the "*good*" things promised do not relate to the present world, yet *neither are they wholly confined to another world*, and you will not have to wait till death before you enjoy them. "Godliness is profitable," etc. Israel had their cloudy pillar by day, etc. They also had their manna in the wilderness, and so have we, even that living bread, etc. We enjoy good things in this life, the pardon of sin, and peace with God. "Now are ye the sons of God," etc. — "Come thou with us," etc.

IV. THE MANNER IN WHICH THIS INVITATION MAY BE ACCEPTED. (This has been described under Division I. 2d. *The Journey*, and may be briefly repeated here.) Sinners must see their danger, renounce the world, choose God for their portion, and his people for their companions, etc. etc. — "Come thou with us."

Lastly. WHAT ANSWER WILL YOU GIVE TO THIS INVITATION?

1st. Some give a direct *negative*, as Hobab did at first; "I will not go." The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God. Some, like Ephraim, are joined to idols, and cannot give them up. Is this your answer? "I will not go." Then you must perish in the wilderness.

2d. Some are deterred by *pride and shame*. They think the people of God beneath them; or what will the world, their present companions say, if they profess Christ?

3d. Some are deterred by the trials of the way. — "Come thou with us," etc. God will be your guide, and he will support you in the severest trials.

4th. Some are convinced of the necessity and importance of this journey to heaven, but they *procrastinate*, like Felix; "Go thy way," etc.

5th. Some are willing to go, but have not *counted the cost*. This was the case with many of Christ's followers, who set out, but turned back, and walked no more with him, John 6: 66.

6th. *A few have resolved to go.* — Like Ruth, nothing shall hinder *them*. The good work has commenced in their souls. The people are

willing in the day of Christ's power. They will go, and like Paul, they count all things but loss, etc. Ruth 1 : 16; Heb. 11 : 25, 26. ———
 "Come," etc.

Awful consideration! Many will never go. Atheists, infidels, lovers of pleasures which are but for a season, and multitudes of others, will never commence this journey. The world is their God. They despise the Gospel, and esteem it as a cunningly devised fable. So they would have it. Alas! they will never see heaven!

JUSTIFICATION.

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."
 —Rom. 3 : 24.

A PRINCIPAL part of this epistle is occupied on the great doctrine of justification by faith, a doctrine that was ever precious to Paul, and will ever be so to all who are experimentally acquainted with it. ——— The Apostle dwells at length upon the sinful and guilty condition of man——he states, with great cogency of argument, the total inability of man to extricate himself from exposure to everlasting perdition, and declares that salvation is alone to be found in the death and resurrection of Immanuel. "Being justified freely by his grace," etc.

I. MAN NEEDS JUSTIFICATION.

This necessity for justification will appear, if we consider

1st. *That man is a transgressor.* God is the great Lawgiver—his law is holy, just, and good, and binding upon all; but it is evident from the statements of Scripture that all have broken this law, and insulted the authority of the Most High. Read the description, Rom. 3 : 10–19, 28; Job 15 : 14; Psalm 14 : 2, 3, etc.; Isa. 53 : 6. Transgression is connected with impurity. The heart of man is impure, deceitful above all things, etc. The fountain is corrupt, and the streams are impure. Man's intemperance, profanity, licentiousness, and every evil work, are dictated by his corrupt heart.

2d. Man, as a sinner, is arraigned at the bar of Divine justice, scrutinized, examined, found *guilty, and condemned to suffer the penalty* due to all transgressors of God's holy law. ——— While the sinner lives he is under the curse or sentence of the law; it all lies against him, and if he die without having condemnation removed, the sentence already declared will be executed by Divine justice upon him. What this sentence will be we learn, ch. 2 : 5, 6, 8, 9, and 6 : 23; Matt. 22 : 11–13, and 25 : 41.

3d. From this view of the subject it is evident that "*by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified,*" etc. All are transgressors, however distinguished in life, however lofty their stations in society, however amiable their *dispositions, etc. etc.* It is undeniable that there are *degrees of vice and virtue*; there are upright and honest men, ~~who~~

word might be taken for any amount, and we admire this portion of moral excellence; but before God they are even as others; all are equally guilty, lost, and ruined by transgression.

If man could now begin a life of perfect purity, his past unforgiven sins, and uncanceled guilt, would still insure his future condemnation, though he might become as holy as a seraph. —

Man cannot justify himself. — The ceremonial law cannot justify him, Heb. 10 : 4. Nor can the moral law, for it demands perfect obedience. No man ever did or can yield it. — The sentence pronounced by that law is *irrevocable*, else what becomes of the moral character of the Lawgiver, his righteousness in promulgating such a law, his purity in permitting the existence of evil, and his truth in violating his word. See Gal. 2 : 16.

II. THE NATURE OF JUSTIFICATION.

1st. It consists in being accounted *just before God*. It supposes a law by which we have been tried, and an acquittal from the charges of that law, and consequently there is no longer an exposure to condemnation. Rom. 5 : 1; 8 : 1, etc.

But no practice of legal courts can give us a full view of this subject. A man accused of crimes there, is found to be innocent; the charges are not substantiated, and his justification follows as a matter of course. Or if he be found guilty, he may be pardoned, though he cannot be justified, and in consequence of the establishment of his guilt, he will ever be branded as a guilty man.

2d. The justification of a sinner is always *connected with the pardon of sins*, and implies that he has been really guilty.

3d. Justification *implies more than pardon*. Great as is the blessing of pardon, justification is a greater blessing. See Acts 13 : 38, 39. It not only implies that the sinner is free from all law-charges, but that he is to be regarded and treated as an innocent being, as though he had never sinned. Hence the triumph of the Apostle, Rom. 8 : 25, 26; 8 : 33, 34. It has therefore not only respect to past transgressions, but includes

4th. An interest in all the blessings of the new covenant, and a title to life and glory everlasting. Titus 3 : 4-7.

III. THE PROCURING CAUSE OF THIS BLESSING : “*The redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*”

The term “redemption” implies a price paid for the deliverance of captives. The incarnation, life, and death of Christ were the vast price paid to the justice of God for our redemption. “In whom we have redemption,” etc. Col. 1 : 14. •

All that the law, and the circumstances of the sinner, required, he gave.

The law demanded purity of nature; a heart which, from its purity, loved the law. “Thy law is in my heart.” “Such an high priest became us, who was holy,” etc.

• *It demanded perfect obedience to all its requirements.* “I delight

to do thy will, O my God." "Thou hast magnified thy law and made it honorable."

It demanded a satisfactory atonement for human guilt. And for this he was qualified. He was divine—see his dignity before he came, and learn it from the numerous statements of Scriptures. He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and on the cross he shed his precious blood. He was accepted. Justice was satisfied, etc. Now we recognize him as our Redeemer, Ransomer, Sacrifice. See Isa. 53 : 4, etc. ; Eph. 1 : 7 ; 1 Pet. 3 : 18.

IV. THE MANNER IN WHICH IT IS GIVEN. "*Freely by his grace.*"

The moving cause of our justification is not any moral excellence on the part of man, but the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. That redemption originated in the boundless mercy of God. "Ye know the grace," etc. We are justified *freely by his grace*. The apparent repetition in the text serves to mark the idea more strongly.

The word "*freely*" denotes the entire want of all merit in man ; it might be literally rendered "without a cause."—— It is not your devotions, your worship, your alms, your sobriety, your integrity, or your holy tempers and dispositions, that can justify you before God. This will appear evident if we consider

1st. That the contrivance of salvation required Infinite wisdom. It originated in the Infinite mind.

2d. The execution of it required Infinite love and power. John 8 : 16.

3d. The justification of sinners is always represented by the sacred writers as being an act of God's free grace, Rom. 4 : 16 ; Gal. 2 : 21 ; Rom. 11 : 6 ; Eph. 2 : 8, 9.

4th. Heaven itself, to which justification gives a title, is the free gift of God, Luke 12 : 32 ; Rom. 6 : 23 ; Jude 21.

Lastly. THE INSTRUMENTAL MEDIUM OF JUSTIFICATION IS FAITH. "And by him all that believe," etc. "Therefore being justified by faith," etc. — The exercise of faith implies

1st. A deep conviction that we need justification.

2d. A knowledge of the method by which God justifies, as stated in the text.

3d. A cordial belief and trust in Christ for pardon and justification. Faith regards Christ as a substitute, bearing the penalty, enduring the curse, etc., etc.

APPLICATION.

1st. Admire the wonders of sovereign grace and redeeming love.

2d. Let the justified prove themselves to be such by good works. "Show me thy faith," etc.

3d. Beware of a self-righteous Spirit.

SEEKING THE LORD AN IMMEDIATE DUTY.

"It is time to seek the Lord." — HOSEA 10 : 12.

SEEKING the Lord is not merely a duty, but an invaluable privilege. It is an act of infinite condescension in Jehovah to allow sinners to seek and to have, an interest in him. — Hence seeking the Lord is an important duty, for it is also connected with infinite results, which are partly developed in time, but more especially in eternity. — Many duties are important; none so important as this. — Many engagements are productive of great advantages; but the magnitude of the advantages resulting from seeking the Lord, "eye hath not seen," etc.

I. THE BEING WHOSE FAVOR MEN ARE TO SEEK.

"The Lord;" this is expressive of his greatness and power as the Proprietor of all things. "He is Lord over all." "The earth is the Lord's," etc. [Refer to his names, titles — his character.]

Think of his relation to us. Creator — Preserver — Benefactor — the God of grace.

Think how able and willing he is to promote our happiness. In a providential sense, he can supply our temporal wants; can preserve us from seen and unseen dangers — he can keep all our bones that not one of them shall be broken; he can frustrate the designs of our enemies, and preserve and deliver our bodies from sickness and death.

But as the God of grace, as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, he can and is willing to deliver us from the fearful and infinite consequences of sin; and give a meetness for, and a title to, glory everlasting.

Without an interest in the Divine favor, we shall be wretched and miserable; — in life, in trials from afflictions, etc., — in death — in eternity.

II. THE NATURE OF SEEKING THE LORD. It implies

1st. *A knowledge of his character* as already described. A conviction of the importance and advantages of having him for our portion. There can be no true seeking the Lord without regarding him as our chief good. "His favor is life;" "his loving-kindness is better than life."

2d. *A conviction that sin has deprived us of him as our portion.* "Your iniquities," etc. Isa. 59 : 2. "All we like sheep," etc. We are transgressors. Sin has led to condemnation; sin has defiled the soul; sin has destroyed communion with God; sin has exposed to the blackness of darkness forever.

3d. *A knowledge of the way in which God may be sought.* He himself has contrived the plan — has revealed it — and it is constantly announced. ~~By the~~ *By the* ~~Sacrifice~~ *Sacrifice* of his Son, the Mediator, the Surety, mercy, pardon, ~~and~~ *and* ~~grace~~ *grace* may be obtained.

4th. *Heartfelt repentance.* Contrition; godly sorrow; confession of evil to God; cessation from sin, as an evidence of regeneration commencing. "Let the wicked," etc. Isa. 55: 7.


5th. *Faith in Christ.* "Repent and believe the Gospel." "Believe in," etc. What is faith? It is the trusting in Christ for salvation; it is casting the imperishable spirit at the altar of the Redeemer's cross to be pardoned, washed, and justified by him. It is the reliance of the sick and diseased one upon the skill and healing power of the Great Physician; it is the reliance of the debtor, of the prisoner, captive, etc. etc., upon Christ, whose work on the cross is adapted to meet all those exigencies of the sinner.

6th. *With diligence and perseverance.* "With the heart man believeth," etc. "Ye shall find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart;" "cry out for the living God."——The results of seeking and finding the Lord are infinite, and therefore the duty demands diligence and perseverance.

III. THE ADVANTAGES OF SEEKING THE LORD.

1st. *We avoid infinite evil;* as the result of transgression. "The wages of sin is death."

2d. *We become possessed of infinite good.* Not merely temporal good.——But spiritual and everlasting good.——What a portion God is! Hear the language of patriarchs and prophets. "The Lord is my portion," etc. "Whom have I in heaven," etc. The benefit of all his attributes—of all his providence—of all the riches of his grace—of all the glories of his heaven—of his eternity.

 How different this good from the mean acquisitions of the world! What is wealth, honor, pomp, etc.?

3d. *We become auxiliaries to Christ* in the glorious work of salvation—extending the boundaries of the mediatorial kingdom. This honor have all the saints! And O what an honor!

4th. By seeking the Lord, and finding him, we do that which thousands in a dying hour, and at the judgment day, will regret that they have not done. "The harvest is past," etc.

5th. *Those who seek the Lord now will never lose him in eternity.* They shall enter a paradise unscathed by sin—where it can never enter, and interrupt and pollute the holy bowers of bliss. "Nothing can hurt or destroy in that holy mountain."

IV. THE IMMEDIATE ATTENTION WHICH THIS DUTY DEMANDS.

"It is time." Who can deny it? Are not all convinced of it?

1st. It is time, according to the *statements of Scriptures.* "To-day," etc. "Behold now," etc. "Seek ye the Lord while," etc. Isa. 55: 6.

2d. It is time, on *account of the great evil already perpetrated.* "One sinner destroyeth much good."

3d. *The great good to be realized* proves that it is time to seek the Lord. You have yet an opportunity to become spiritually happy, rich, honorable. When the miser, the ambitious, etc., perceive an opportunity of *gaining gold, honor, etc.,* how do they rush forward to seize the coveted good!

4th. *The frailty of human existence* declares it is time. How uncertain is life! — What thou doest, do quickly.

5th. It is time, because *the facilities in seeking* the Lord will gradually lessen. — Launched on the current of time, and silently rolling onwards to the ocean of a dark and miserable eternity, the further you are borne along, the more difficult will be your return.

It is high time, ye YOUNG, ye AGED, etc. etc.

CHRISTIAN DEPARTMENT.

"Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." — 1 P^{er}. 2: 12.

THE preceding verses contain most important truths. A reference to Christ as the glorious foundation of the Church, v. 6—the blessedness of resting on that foundation, and the dreadful consequences of rejecting Christ under that character, v. 7, 8. The Apostle then reminds believers of their various privileges and distinctions through *grace*, or by connection with the sure Foundation, v. 9, 10. And then, in the most affectionate manner, he exhorts them to let their conduct and disposition correspond with their profession of Christ, v. 11, 12. Were all Christians to act thus, what an impetus would be given to the progress of Christ's cause! — The neglect of it has frequently produced the most affecting consequences.

I. THE CONDUCT RECOMMENDED BY THE APOSTLE: "Having your conversation," etc. Observe

1st. The word "conversation" is used two ways. Sometimes it signifies a certain alliance, and means citizenship; and sometimes it denotes a peculiar behavior. Our translators have preferred the latter; rendering the original word, *conversation*, meaning by the term not discourse only, but the whole tenor of our conduct.

The Christian, by reason of the work of the Spirit on his soul, and his faith in his Redeemer, becomes a citizen of heaven; he belongs to "a better country," etc.; he has it in prospect, he will finally settle there, though he is now away from his Father's house.

As this is the case, a suitable mode of conduct becomes him. A citizen of Rome could reside in any of the distant provinces. A citizen of heaven resides on earth for a season, but he is a stranger, etc., v. 11. Though in the world, he is not of it; but while the will of God detains him here, he must have his conversation honest, etc.

2d. The word "honest," in its present connection, has a comprehensive import—meaning sincere, upright, just, consistent, amiable, honorable. The Christian character is to be adorned by "whatsoever things are just," etc. Phil. 4: 8.

3d. *The sphere in which they move, and the persons by whom their*

conduct is observed. The sphere is a world of iniquity—a world in which they must toil, and suffer, and die.—— Their observers are “Gentiles.” In the Apostolic age these were Heathens, idolaters, and deadly enemies to Christianity.—— And the wicked have the same antipathy now; they hate Christ; they hate Christians. Never forget three things,

(1.) While you live you will have to associate and do business with the ungodly—in your shops—in your places of employment. How important that your conduct and speech should be as becometh the Gospel of Christ!

(2.) The eyes of the wicked are upon professors of religion. They are watchful observers, and bold censurers. Give the enemies of Christ no cause to blaspheme. Be watchful; the wicked will endeavor to ensnare you, to draw you into temptation, and then accuse you.—— Nothing is more congenial to the mind of an infidel than to see a professor of Christ step from the path of rectitude.


(3.) You will be often *spoken of as evil-doers*, even though your conduct may be consistent.——Christ was called a glutton, blasphemer, impostor, etc.——It is rare to escape the scourge of tongues. A bad opinion, a bad report, makes no one a bad man.——

4th. The *conduct which Christians should manifest*. The text and context declare. They are regarded as sustaining various relations in society, the respective duties of which they are required to fulfil: Submission to the laws, ver. 13–15.——As citizens they are entitled to a conscientious enjoyment of their liberty, ver. 16.——They are to be kind and courteous in their behavior to men, ver. 17.——As members of Christ’s Church, they are to love as brethren, ver. 17.——In all they do, they are to “*fear God*,” they are to “*honor the king*,” which respect to earthly majesty is to be subordinate to that of fearing God, ver. 17.——As servants, they are to learn subjection, ver. 18.——How great would be the influence of such upright and honorable conduct!——To have the conversation honest among the Gentiles, more particularly, there must be

1st. *Sincerity of profession*. “An Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile.” That we be what we profess to be. The honesty of our profession is proved by *gracious experience*, and *holy practice*. Not merely the form, etc. Rom. 2: 28, 29.

2d. *Truth, or veracity of speech*. The Gentile or Heathen world have ever been subject to the vice of lying. See Titus 1: 12. The Apostle therefore was urgent that in respect of truthful speech, Christians should be distinct from others.——Lying is a mean and despicable vice, and sinks a man in the esteem of others. In nothing does the corruption of our nature more evidently appear than in this horrid vice, which is one of the worst ingredients in the human character. It is infamous in any man, and utterly inconsistent with the Christian profession.——Our Lord, in his sermon on the Mount, has given most important injunctions to his disciples on this subject. He would have them so plain, sincere, and free from guile, that their word should be equivalent to the most solemn oath, and that in all their assertions they should *content themselves* with a simple affirmation, *It is, or it is not*. Matt. 5: 37; Eph. 4: 25; Col. 3: 9.——The evil

consequences of lying may be seen, Acts 5. — Among those who shall be excluded from the kingdom of heaven, are "Whosoever loveth and maketh a lie," Rev. 22 : 15 ; 21 : 8, 27. To have your conversation honest, etc., avoid every species of deception. — Avoid duplicity. — Avoid flattery ; for it is an unworthy kind of dissimulation. — Avoid vague and equivocating language, used with a design to deceive.

 To the rising generation show the odiousness of lying, correct the vice, and inculcate the importance and necessity of truth.

8d. The exhortation requires *justice and equity in all our transactions*. The golden rule is to be the directory ; "Thou shalt do unto others," etc. This rule forbids all defrauding, overreaching, or taking an undue advantage, or employing artifice or guile, to secure or promote worldly interest. Micah 6 : 8 ; Thess. 4 : 6.

4th. *It requires fidelity in reference to all our engagements.* — Some are servants — some have pecuniary trusts — some are overseers, etc., some have high offices. How important then is fidelity ! the affairs of life cannot be managed without it. — Time is a trust ; riches are a trust ; talents, authority, etc. etc., are trusts ; are we faithful ? Titus 2 : 9, 10.

The preceding characteristics are indispensable. Ps. 15.

5th. *The exhortation requires "good works."* — The Gospel induces men to work. Though we shall never be saved for our works ; yet without working we never can be saved, James 2 : 14, etc. These good works of love, of sympathy, of visitation, of prayer, of contribution, must be seen by men, not to feed human boasting, but to show the power of the Gospel. They must be seen, or how can believers become patterns of good works ? Tit. 2 : 7 ; see also Matt. 5 : 16.

II. THE REASONS OR MOTIVES ASSIGNED FOR SUCH CONDUCT.

1st. *It will exhibit the power of the Gospel.* It will show what a change has been effected ; that holy fruits have been produced from a most unlikely soil. Tit. 2 : 12.

2d. *It will show the excellency of religion.* How different from sin ! What a pure morality ! To speak the truth, to be sincere, to do justice, and love mercy, is to be like angels, like Christ, like God.

3d. *It will counteract slander.* "Evil-doers." — The best way of answering false accusations is to live them down. Christians are frequently represented as enemies to government, because they conscientiously differ, etc. ; the best answer is to live a quiet and peaceable life, 1 Tim. 2 : 2. The influence of real piety is irresistible. — Because Christians cannot associate with them, they are charged with being too precise, and hypocritical, 1 Pet. 4 : 4.

4th. *It will promote the Divine glory ;* and that too "in the day of visitation." God visits his people in a way of mercy, Luke 1 : 68 ; he visits sinners in a way of judgment, Luke 19 : 44.

Some have been allured to the love and espousal of religion by the exemplary conduct of believers — especially by their conduct in affliction, persecution, and death.

Some, when visited by affliction and trouble, have been induced to

confess the reality and excellency of religion, from what they have observed in the conduct of its genuine professors. — When the flood came, the wicked must have known that while they were wrong, Noah was right. — So with the inhabitants of Sodom. — The convictions of Pharaoh often betrayed themselves in the presence of Moses and Aaron; and when the mysterious handwriting appeared upon the wall, the consternation of Belshazzar was sufficiently evident. — In all these instances an involuntary homage is rendered to truth, and God is glorified. — A day of visitation is coming, even the judgment day, when the wicked will be compelled to feel that religion is the one thing needful.

APPLICATION.

1st. Is your conduct becoming the Gospel?

2d. What has been its effects? Have sinners been convinced? Has God been glorified?

CHRIST CALLING MARY.

"And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee. As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him." — JOHN 11 : 28, 29.

LIFE is uncertain. Death has passed upon all men, in that all have sinned. — Death is no respecter of persons. The loveliest, the dearest, the wisest, and the most pious, must die. — How happy to have at hand a consoling friend when the last enemy throws his mortal darts into the family circle! — The preceding verses refer to the death of a beloved brother, belonging to a pious family in Bethany. The removal of their friend deeply affected them. — But they had a friend in Christ. Information of the sickness of Lazarus had been communicated to Christ; but after he had received the information, "he abode," etc., ver. 6. But Jesus knew all things—the end from the beginning, and therefore he said, ver. 4. When the sublime purposes of his mind were ready for development, he said, ver. 11, etc. — As Jesus drew near to Bethany, Martha "went and met him," ver. 20, when an interesting conversation took place. — Then she called Mary, as in the text.

I. THE OFFICIAL CHARACTER OF CHRIST: *The Master.*

The word master is variously used in the Scriptures; sometimes merely as a mode of address, Mark 10 : 17; sometimes it denotes those who have rule over servants, Eph. 6 : 5; sometimes it means a teacher, John 3 : 10, and even ministers and preachers of the word, Eccl. 12 : 11.

But Christ applies this term to himself, see Matt. 23 : 8-10; see also John 13 : 13, 14. *The same term* is applied to him, Eph. 6 : 9; Col. 4 : 1.

1st. This implies *authority*. He was sent for this purpose. "Whom he hath appointed heir of all things." See John 3 : 2. Hence his credentials are Divine. As a teacher, Christ possessed

2d. *Infinite wisdom*. "Light of the world." "Day-spring from on high to visit us." "Bright and morning star." "Sun of Righteousness." The "only wise God" who is made unto us "Wisdom." The darkness of man's mind required such a Teacher.

8d. As a teacher he is *Supreme*. "One is your Master." He is the only "Head of the Church." The word *Master* is synonymous with *Lord*. And as such he is "Lord of all." "All things were created by him," etc., Col. 1 : 15-18. He has "all power," etc. Angels, devils, men, the world, the universe, are subject to his control——He is the only Lawgiver, the only Ruler, and Teacher in Israel.——What are synods, councils, convocations, etc. ? "To the law and the testimony," etc. "One is your Master." "Call no man father," Matt. 23 : 9.——As the master, or Lord, he has his disciples and servants, 2 Tim. 2 : 21.

4th. He is infinitely *kind and compassionate*. Heb. 4 : 15. Pities our ignorance, etc.

5th. He is *impartial* in all his dealings with his people. "Neither is their respect," etc., Eph. 6 : 9.

6th. His teaching is *effectual*. "Maketh wise unto salvation."

II. THE COMING OF CHRIST. "The Master is come."

1st *He has come from heaven to earth*. John 1 : 14; Heb. 2 : 14; 1 Tim. 3 : 16.

2d. *He has come as a Divine Saviour*. He became incarnate, but he was Divine. Proved by Scripture—by the testimony of God—by the testimony of his enemies—by his miracles.

As such he fulfilled the law—endured its penalty, magnified and made it honorable. He has come as the great High priest to atone. He has atoned. "It is finished." "What the law could not do," etc.

3d. He has come as *the King and Ruler of his Church*. Promulgated his laws, granted immunities and privileges—he will spread his rule, and protect his people to the end.

4th. He has come as *the Resurrection and the Life*—the Author of eternal life. John 11 : 25. "Who only hath immortality." "I am come that ye might have life," etc. How interesting was this character to Martha and Mary!

III. THE CALL. "Calleth for thee."

1st. He calls by *the preaching of the Gospel*. "Go ye into all the world." 2 Cor. 5 : 18, 19.

2d. By the influences of his Spirit, John 16 : 7-11. By that Spirit he calls upon sinners——and enlightens, comforts his people in all their afflictions, etc.

3d. *By his providential dispensations*. The Master of Providence has come in that affliction, that bereavement, etc., to awaken thee, and call thee into his service.

4th. *By the entreaty of his people*. It is their duty to call men to God—to recommend his service. "O come, taste, and see," etc.

IV. THE EFFECT OF THIS CALL. "As soon as," etc. The effect on Mary was obedience, which was

1st. *Immediate.* "As soon as," etc.

2d. *It was prompt.* "Arose quickly." The sinner must not confer with flesh and blood, nor with friends. It is vastly important. Compliance is connected with eternity.

3d. To comply with this call implies a sense of need of Christ, repentance, faith.

Conclusion: "The Master, etc., calleth for thee." He calleth

For you who have long sat under the sound of the Gospel.

For you who are convinced—and are groaning to be delivered from guilt.

For you who have talents, and may be useful.

For you young persons — aged.

For you, ye conflicting and distressed believers.

For you who are appointed unto death. He calleth you to rest, to glory.

CHRIST'S GRACIOUS RECEPTION OF SINNERS.

"This man receiveth sinners."—LUKE 15 : 2.

THE text contains one of the most glorious truths in the word of God ; the most important that ever reached the human ear, or can be entertained by the heart of man. — Christ's association with publicans and sinners was displeasing to the Pharisees and scribes, who had a high opinion of themselves and despised others. — The text was uttered by them for the purpose of degrading Christ. — But what they thought to be his shame was his glory. The praises of the Church militant continually flow, and the praises of the Church triumphant will be eternally given, because, "This man receiveth sinners."

I. THE PERSON WHO RECEIVES SINNERS.

Called sometimes the Son of man ; Son of God ; the only begotten Son of God ; Christ Jesus ; he is represented as a Saviour, a Ransomer, a Deliverer. Now such representations imply

1st. *That he was Divine.* No human being can save a soul. It requires Infinite power, purity, and love. All these were possessed by Christ. See John 1 : 1, etc. ; Phil. 2 : 6 ; Heb. 1 : 3, etc. His Divinity was proved by his miracles, by his resurrection.

2d. *He became man,* that he might die as the Substitute for guilty man. And he did die. His sacrifice was vicarious. Isa. 53 : 4, 5 ; Dan. 9 : 24 ; Rom. 5 : 8.

3d. *He has issued his invitations* for sinners to come to him ; therefore he is perfectly willing to receive them. — He is

good Samaritan, and will bind up the wounds of the sinner; he is the great Physician of souls, and will heal all their diseases; he is the compassionate Shepherd to receive the wandering sheep into his fold, etc. etc.

II. THE PERSONS WHOM HE RECEIVES. "*Sinners.*"

This is the character of all men. Said to be "lost," "ready to perish," and are represented to be "guilty," "condemned," and helpless. — Christ came to seek and to save such persons as these. Their state was wretched; it was desperate. Had they not been irrecoverable by any other means, he would not have come to save them. — If sinners needed instruction only, the prophets might have sufficed: but he came to do that which prophets could not do: — to destroy the works of the Devil — to deliver from the wrath to come.

All are sinners. Who can say, "I have made my heart clean?" "Who can bring," etc. Job 14 : 4. The challenge is given to all, and there can be only one answer, viz: Rom. 3 : 10-19. — Christ receives

1st. *Convinced sinners.* They feel themselves to be such,—view themselves as guilty and condemned.

2d. *Penitential sinners.* Like the prodigal—the publican—those who were pricked in their hearts, Acts 2 : 37.

3d. *Helpless sinners.* Who feel they cannot extricate themselves from sin, guilt, condemnation, eternal death.

4th. *Believing sinners.* Who believe that in Christ alone their help is found—who rely upon him, and trust in him for salvation.

5th. *Earnest, persevering sinners.*

6th. *The vilest sinners.*

III. THE DESIGN OF HIS RECEIVING THEM. The design is gracious and magnificent; it is to save them in time, and through all time, and to glorify them in eternity.

1st. *To pardon and justify them.* "Thy sins are forgiven thee." Acts 13 : 38, 39.

2d. *To give peace and rest;* to quiet the conscience; Rom. 5 : 2; Matt. 11 : 28.

3d. *To adopt into his family,* and to invest with all the privileges of his people. John 1 : 12.

4th. *To enlighten, instruct, and seal with his Spirit.*

5th. To save from the sting of death, the power of the grave, the grasp of Satan, the vengeance of everlasting fire, and to endow them with eternal life. — What a gracious and sublime reception!

Finally. Such a Reception is certain; for

It was the design of his incarnation and death.

His gracious conduct when on earth is a further proof.

The gracious declarations and invitations of his word prove it. "For the Son of man," etc., Matt. 18 : 11. "There is joy," etc. "And the Spirit and the bride," etc.

The numerous examples of his saving power prove it.

THE CARNALITY OF THE SINNER, AND THE PRAYER OF THE SAINT.

"There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us."—Ps. 4: 6.

It is very interesting to observe the difference between the righteous and the wicked. The Scriptures throughout mark this difference; it is seen in their spirit, in their conduct, and in the end of their course.—The result of this observation will ever influence an enlightened judgment to decide that the one is characterized by extreme folly, while the other is distinguished by heavenly wisdom. Both characters are engaged in the pursuit of happiness; one seeks it from the world, from the gratification of sensual appetites, and from the creature; the other expects it from God, and makes application to that unfailing source of substantial bliss.

I. THE CONDUCT OF SINNERS: "Who will," etc.

1st. *The object of their inquiry.* "Good." That is, good in *their* estimation. Good, as dictated by the carnal mind. That which is adapted to gratify it.—But that which sinners seek is not *good*. They are awfully deceived. They call darkness light; bitter, sweet; evil, good. Isa. 44: 20.—Observe

(1.) It is *worldly good* they want. Intimated by ver. 7. Increase of their corn and wine; all they desired was plenty of the wealth of this world, that they might enjoy abundance of the delights of sense. And as Matthew Henry observes: "They inquire for any good, not for the chief good; all they want is outward good, present good, partial good, good meat, good drink, a good trade, a good estate; and what are all these worth without a good God, and a good heart."—Some men act as if they had nothing else to live for, to work and strive for, than the possession of such good.—Luxury is the idol which some worship—intemperance the all in all of others, while thousands worship at the shrine of mammon.

(2.) Some seek after *carnal indulgences*, which they esteem as their good. The gratification of animal passions, of brutal appetites, 2 Pet. 2: 10; Rom. 1: 29.

(3.) They seek "good" from the *inventions of man*. What various schemes and plans have been devised for the gratification of the sensual appetites! Hence the numerous frivolous games—the tavern—the theatre—the Sabbath-day excursions, etc., Eccl. 7: 29.

2d. Sometimes this "good" is sought to be obtained by unlawful means. As it is their idol, for the possession of which they are so enthusiastic, they rush forward to possess it, and frequently violate the principles of honesty. Hence what worldly policy, what attempts at fraud, etc. etc., in order to obtain worldly wealth!

3d. This conduct is *very general*. "There be many that say, Who," etc. It is a fact that the *great majority* are looking at "the things which are seen." *It was so in the Psalmist's time; it is so still.* Multitudes

upon multitudes have lost sight of God and eternity. Look abroad and see.——Crowds of devotees are rushing forth to the house of mirth, etc.; crowds to the court; crowds to the theatre; crowds to the mart and the exchange to obtain the means to gratify the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.

4th. This restless desire after happiness, *leads to neglect of God.* He is the only source of true wisdom and happiness, but they ask no counsel of him. They turn to the world, to the blind, to the infatuated, like themselves, and inquire, "Who will," etc. "They follow a multitude to do evil."——They associate with them, becoming the "companions of fools;" they "run with them to the same excess of riot."

5th. That worldly and sensual good when obtained *will disappoint their expectations.* Sin never brings satisfaction, but rather pain and woe.——Could a man possess the whole world, there would still be something wanting.——The soul is immortal; it is infinite; therefore nothing but an infinite God can meet its aspirations!——What though you could reside in a palace of magnificence, and have a large domain; be clothed in purple, and fare sumptuously every day; what though your breast should sustain a star of honor, and your brow be encircled with a golden coronet, there would still be something wanting, and your panting heart would still prompt the inquiry, "Who will show us any good?"

II. THE PRAYER OF THE SAINT.

1st. *This prayer is dictated by a regenerated soul.* A soul that has been enlightened by the Spirit to perceive the vanities of earth—their insufficiency as a portion. The soul has sickened at them; it has been reconciled to God by faith in Christ; it has been clothed with newness of life, and directed its prayer to him, "Lord, lift thou up," etc.

2d. The prayer implies a full persuasion *that God is an infinitely satisfying portion.* He is infinite in every perfection.——He is a God in covenant with all his people. "The Lord God is a sun and shield," etc. "Whom have I in heaven but thee," etc.

3d. It is a prayer for *peculiar gracious manifestation.* "Lift thou up the light," etc. A very striking and significant expression. It is speaking after the manner of men. The countenance is an index to the mind. Hatred, grief, pride, fierceness, anger are indicated by the countenance; Gen. 4:5; Neh. 2:2, 3; Ps. 10:4. The favor of God; the graces and influences of his Spirit, are indicated by "the light of his countenance." When faith is weakened, sensible comfort lessened, the Lord is represented as "hiding from the soul the light of his countenance." Ps. 13:1.——This prayer is an application for

(1.) *An interest in the friendship of God.*——A smile on the human countenance is indicative of friendship and love.——It is a desire to be accepted and approved through the sacrifice of Christ. I have been like others, seeking after earthly good. But I value the "light," etc., more. Give me to rejoice with thy chosen, Isa. 12:1, etc. "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation."

(2.) *For his providential regard and preservation.* He is called "the preserver of his saints." "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel," etc.

(3.) *For comfort and support in the dark seasons of life.* "Lift up the light," etc., in affliction, in temptation, in persecution, in bereavement, and in every trial.

(4.) *For communion.* If thou dost lift it up, then I shall see it, feel it, for thou wilt be near me, present with me. My fellowship will be, etc. Darkness will flee away—my mind will expand in knowledge, in joy, in triumph. Sweet will be the closet—the mercy-seat, the house of prayer. — "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that dwellest between the cherubim, O shine forth."

(5.) *For final acceptance.* Preserve me to the end—carry on the work which thou hast begun; and then present me faultless, etc. Let the light of thy countenance guide me to that world of which thou art the "light," when I shall see thee without a veil between.

APPLICATION.

1st. The sinner has but little cause to rejoice in the possession of earthly good. It is often a snare—it often cheats and robs the soul of infinite good.

2d. The Christian is the only happy man, having the light of God's countenance—an interest in all the perfections of God.

3d. To which of these characters do you belong?

DELIVERANCE FROM CAPTIVITY.

"To preach deliverance to the captives."—LUKE 4 : 18.

THE embassy of Christ to earth was most momentous. — The deliverance of a country from famine, of a nation from the horrors of war, would be a mighty achievement. — But these are trifles compared with the great Salvation which Christ came to procure. — Christ declared the authority and design of his mission, by an appeal to prophecy, v. 17, 18. He showed the credentials of his office. — How benevolent was his design! "To preach," etc.

I. MAN IS IN A STATE OF SPIRITUAL CAPTIVITY.

Ordinary captivity is a state of slavish servitude, under some tyrant or cruel enemy, who may have seized the captive as a prisoner of war, or stolen him from his peaceful home for the purposes of servitude. — Man is in a state of spiritual captivity, as appears from the following Scriptural representations:

1st. *He is in bondage to sin*, John 8 : 34. Sin rules and reigns in him. He is a slave to his lusts, 2 Pet. 2 : 19.

2d. *He is in bondage to Satan*, 2 Tim. 2 : 26; he rules in his heart, Eph. 2 : 2.

3d. *He is in bondage to the law.* Not having performed the requirements,

ments of that law, he is placed under arrest to it, Gal. 4 : 24, 25 ; 8 : 10 ; he is in bondage to death, Heb. 2 : 15 ; the wrath of God abideth on him, John 3 : 36.

This state of bondage implies,

1st. *That the sinner is in a state of darkness.* Prisons are dark and gloomy, fit emblems of a sinner's mind. It was customary in ancient times to put out the eyes of some prisoners of war, and in some way or other to maim them. As Zedekiah, 2 Kings 25 : 7 ; see Isa. 49 : 9 ; Eph. 4 : 18 ; 1 Cor. 2 : 14. Satan blinds the sinner's mind.

2d. The sinner is *bound with fetters.* These are called the "bonds of iniquity." The opening of the prison to them that are bound, Isa. 61 : 1 ; the bond of a hard heart, of ignorance of, and prejudice against the truth, the bond of unbelief, the bond of fleshly lusts, the bond of worldly pleasures.

3d. *The sinner is an exile.* Like the Prodigal, by allurements, by Satanic strategy, etc., he has been carried from his Father's house into a far country, even to Sinai, where he is under arrest to the law. Allurements, Prov. 7 : 21 ; Satanic influence, 2 Cor. 11 : 14. Satan, like a cursed pirate, puts out false colors, pretends himself a friend ; he presents the pleasures and profits of the world, by which he overcomes, and carries him away captive.——This state of exile is represented, Eph. 2 : 11, 12. He is far from God, etc.

4th. *He is in a state of want.* Even as an earthly captive is supported by the coarsest fare, etc. Sinners eat not that which is really good ; "They spend their money," Isa. 55 : 1, 2. They are said to feed on the *wind*, on *ashes*, on *husks*, etc. See Isa. 44 : 20 ; Hosea 12 : 1 ; Prov. 20 : 17. What is wealth, honor, worldly pleasures, but husks, compared with Christ ? They are without peace, without comfort, without substantial enjoyment.

5th. *He is in a state of wretchedness and misery.* A captive is frequently stripped naked—the sinner is naked, without the robe of righteousness, Isa. 64 : 6 ; in a state of disease, Isa. 1 : 5, 6 ; of extreme poverty and helplessness, Rev. 3 : 17 ; and under sentence of death, Rom. 6 : 23. If not liberated he will be punished with, etc., 2 Thess. 1 : 9.

II. THE NATURE OF THE DELIVERANCE TO BE PREACHED.

1st. This Deliverance was *preached by Christ*, and it is fully *announced by the Gospel* ; it is glad tidings of salvation to poor guilty captives ready to perish.

2d. *Jesus Christ is the great Deliverer.* The 18th. verse sets forth his glorious prerogatives as the Saviour of the lost.——Deliverance from this captivity could only have been effected by him, Acts 4 : 12 ; John 8 : 36. This deliverance was effected through the coming of Christ.

(1) *By a great Ransom.* "Ye are bought with a price," 1 Cor. 6 : 20, and see 1 Pet. 1 : 18. "The redemption of the soul is precious." All the gold and silver in the world, and all the wealth thereof, were there ten thousand worlds more, could not redeem one soul from this *captivity* ; Micah 6 : 7 ; nothing but the blood of Christ, 1 Pet. 1 : 19.

(2.) *By conquest.* He not merely paid the ransom price, but he destroyed the power of man's enslavers. See the argument of Christ, Luke 11 : 21, 22. Satan is the strong man armed, and Jesus Christ the Person who is stronger than he; — able to subdue sin, conquer Satan, overcome death, 1 John 3 : 8. He rescues sinners from the thralldom of Satan, and gives them the liberty of the sons of God.

Behold then the love of Christ — His work is perfect. — He became man's substitute. Was man involved in darkness? So was Christ, Luke 22 : 53; Matt. 26 : 37. — Bound with fetters? So was Christ, Matt. 27 : 2. — An exile? So was Christ; he left heaven and came into this vile world. — In a state of want? "Foxes had holes," etc. — In a state of wretchedness and misery? So was Christ; "My soul is exceeding sorrowful," etc., "and he sweat as it were great drops of blood," etc. — Condemned to die? So was Christ; "he was made a curse for us."

3d. *Multitudes have been delivered,* and are now in a state of perfect freedom.

He has delivered them from their prison-house, paid their debts and poured oil and wine into their bleeding hearts; Rom. 5 : 1; 8 : 1. — Their darkness is gone, 2 Cor. 4 : 6. No longer aliens, but fellow-citizens, etc. — Though formerly in want, now they have abundance from the fulness of Christ. Their misery has given place to happiness — their despair to the hope of everlasting glory.

4th. *This deliverance is realized by faith.* Many passages teach this. There is no other way.

III. THIS DELIVERANCE MUST BE PREACHED.

It was the will of Christ that it should be. Hence the commission. It must be conveyed and preached to the captives wherever placed.

It must be preached fully — as a free deliverance — for the vilest. — It must be preached simply — disinterestedly — and with great boldness, earnestness, and affection — preached to all.

APPLICATION.

1st. *Humility.* Those now free, were once captives. Wholly indebted to Christ. Then all boasting is excluded.

2d. *Joy.* You are free — this the pledge of everlasting freedom.

3d. *Encouragement.* The sighing, groaning captive may be delivered.

GRATITUDE FOR CHRISTIAN PRIVILEGES.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." — *Eph. 1 : 3.*

THE mercy of God to man is replete with interest to the Christian. He sees that mercy displayed in creation, in providence, and ~~in~~

It is always full of wonder; it is the source of rich spiritual enjoyment to the man who has been arrested, reclaimed, and saved by it. It invests him with the most glorious privileges and blessings; it sustains him in every trial; it secures him in temptation; it succors him when cast down; it irradiates his life and his death with the hope of immortality, and at length gives him an abundant entrance,—etc. ——— The more we view this gracious love and care, and consider the Divine regard, as bestowed on creatures so worthless and vile, the more we shall be disposed to glorify God, and say, “Blessed,” etc.

I. A GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT: “Blessed be God.”

He is worthy to be praised from the rising of the sun, etc. His love to his people is infinite. His salvation is great, rich, and free. All his works praise him, and show forth his eternal power and Godhead, but it is peculiar to his saints to bless him. They are a royal priesthood, whose office it is to collect the offerings of the whole creation, and present them before the Lord.——Blessing is an expression of the heart, and includes in it the exercise of love.——Blessing God implies

1st. A knowledge of God in *his gracious character*. This must be known and understood, in order to praise him.

2d. An *experimental acquaintance with that goodness*—a partaker of spiritual blessings in heavenly places. When this is the case, there will be praise. 1 Pet. 1: 3.

3d. *Mental and vocal praise to God*. In private—in association—in the house of God. He who praises, feels his unworthiness to receive God’s mercy—his soul expands with delight at being the recipient of such grace—he is thankful—devoted to his service and honor—consecrates himself with all his talents, time, wealth, to the glory of God, 1 Pet. 2: 9.

II. THE TITLE UNDER WHICH THE APOSTLE BLESSES GOD: “*The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*.”

A similar phrase occurs, 1 Cor. 1: 3. He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the gift of his endless love to man, John 3: 16; see also John 1: 18. These expressions denote that Christ was of the same nature with God, or that God is his real and proper Father, John 5: 18; Rom. 8: 32. Some have supposed that the Sonship arises from his incarnation, or his being manifest in the flesh, and sent into the world, or from the union of the divine and human nature in him.——But it is evident that Christ is called the Son of God in reference to his divine nature, and that antecedently to his taking upon him our nature, 1 John 3: 8; Gal. 4: 4. He must therefore have been the Son of God before he “was manifest in the flesh,” etc.——Hence the title in the text implies,

1st. *Divinity*. God is his Father, he is the Son of God, and is therefore possessed of the divine nature. Believers are sons of God by adoption; men and angels are sons of God by creation, but Christ is “*the only-begotten Son of God* ;” the “*brightness*,” etc. Heb. 1: 2-4.

2d. *Pre-existence*—intimate converse. “He was in the bosom of

the Father," John 1: 18; he must therefore be acquainted with the secrets of the divine counsels. This is important; for he came to declare the gracious will of God. Having been, in his pre-existent state, intimately and ineffably conversant with the Father, he was admirably qualified to reveal salvation to a guilty world.

3d. *Covenant*; God the Father, and God the Son, covenanted together for the salvation of man, as the Scriptures amply declare, Isa. 42: 6; 49: 8; Acts 3: 25, 26; Gal. 3: 17; Heb. 8: 6, etc.; 12: 24.

4th. *Humanity*; in consequence of this covenant; — *sacrifice*. The only begotten Son in a human form.

He appears as the model of Jehovah. The splendors of the Deity are veiled by humanity; so that the mind can gaze upon the bright refulgent Sun. We can "learn of him," for the most sublime and necessary truths drop from his lips. He teaches like a God; and yet with the meekness of a lamb. How gloriously was he constituted—to reveal the will of God! — then to die! to fulfil every iota of the Divine covenant.

III. THE REASON ASSIGNED FOR BLESSING GOD: "Who hath blessed us," etc.

1st. *Christians are blessed*. The curse is repealed; they are no longer under the law, but under grace. — Some think themselves happy, when they are really miserable. Many cry peace, peace, etc. — But Christians are blessed people. "Blessed is the man," etc. Ps. 32: 1-2; 34: 8; 65: 4; Matt. 5: 1, etc.

2d. They are blessed with *all spiritual blessings*. Temporal blessings are valuable, but these are the chief. Worldly good is prized, coveted, and idolized by thousands; but what are the treasures of earth compared with the riches of grace. — Spiritual blessings, *i. e.*, the pure doctrines of Christ, and the abundant gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, justifying, sanctifying, and building us up on our most holy faith.

These blessings are *numerous*; "all spiritual blessings;" even on earth they are so — but what are they in heaven — in eternity. — Their numerical and intrinsic value will be disclosing as the ages of eternity roll.

These blessings are specified in the context: — "*chosen in Christ*, v. 4. Gentiles as well as Jews; all who should believe were chosen in him — *acceptance* through Christ, v. 6 — *forgiveness of sins* through redeeming blood, v. 7 — *sanctification*; "holy," v. 4 — "*adoption*," v. 5 — *revelation* of his will by his Spirit, v. 9 — *present and everlasting union* with Christ, v. 10 — *sealed* with the spirit of promise, v. 14; *impressing the heart* with the divine image, creating holy desires, leading the soul to God, giving foretastes of heaven, and then the inheritance itself, v. 14.

IV. WHERE AND HOW HAS HE BLESSED THEM? "In heavenly places," etc.

The word *heavenly* may mean blessings of the most exalted, or *excellent kind*; *spiritual* in opposition to those that are *earthly*; *eternal* in opposition to those that are temporal. "Spiritual blessings, yea heavenly."

In a heavenly age; in Gospel times, in which life and immortality are brought to light. "The Sun of Righteousness has arisen," etc. "Kings and prophets desired to see," etc.

In a heavenly place, the Church of God, which is of heavenly origin, has heavenly privileges and distinctions—composed of heaven-born people—destined for a heavenly home.——It means also in a Christian, not in Heathen lands, etc.

He has blessed us *in* and by Christ Jesus. He is the Author—the procurer of these blessings.——

Believers are united to him, as the branches to the vine, etc.——and thus they are blessed in him.

APPLICATION.

How rich the inheritance of the saints!

How wretched the sinner, who is not so blessed!

LOVE TO THE HOUSE OF GOD.

"Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth."—Ps. 26: 8.

It is the duty of all Christians to "examine" themselves; this duty, though it may frequently cause regret at spiritual deficiency, will produce happy results. It will humble, it will quicken the soul, and lead it to God for mercy and grace to help, etc.—— This Psalm indicates to us this important duty as practised by the Psalmist. (See the preceding verses.) It is a sure symptom of a regenerated spirit, when sin is hated, when wicked association is disliked and avoided, v. 4-5; and when the house of God is loved, and preferred to the tents of wickedness. "Lord, I have loved," etc,

I. THE OBJECT OF THE CHRISTIAN'S LOVE: "*The habitation of thy house,*" etc.

It would have been better translated, Jehovah, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place of the tabernacle of thy glory. *Habitation* refers to the holy of holies where the Divine presence was manifested; and the *place of the tabernacle* must refer to the mercy-seat, or the place where the glory of the Lord appeared between the cherubim upon the cover of the ark of the covenant.

To the worship of God in the tabernacle succeeded Solomon's temple for about 416 years, and then the second temple, which was destroyed ~~about~~ 40 years after the crucifixion of Christ.——The terms, "house of

God," "habitation," etc., have now a spiritual application to the Church of Christ, and the worship and service which Christians there render to God. 1 Tim. 3 : 15; Heb. 10 : 21. Observe

1st. This habitation, or house, is designed by the Great Proprietor of it for *public worship*.

The worship of God is *united and social*, though private worship is not to be dispensed with. See Ps. 42 : 4. It is delightful to witness a *multitude* pressing to the sanctuary to utter their *praises*, offer their *prayers*, to *hear the word*, and to receive public instruction.

The worship of God is rational. Acts 17 : 28.——God requires it. Matt. 4 : 10; Zech. 14 : 6.——He directs its performance. John 4 : 24.

The worship of God is important. It is so to the world. Take away the Lord's day, and its holy privileges, and there must be confusion and every evil work. It is important to Christians, as it constitutes the source of their highest enjoyment, etc.——What are countries, what are their inhabitants, where there is no Sabbath, no Divine worship? The Sabbath was made for man. Mark 2 : 27.

2d. This habitation, or house, implies *the manifestation of the Divine Presence*. The "place where thine honor dwelleth," or the place where the glory of the Lord appeared;—the Divine Shekinah. 1 Kings 9 : 3; Ex. 20 : 4; Matt. 18 : 20; Ps. 27 : 4; Ps. 132 : 13, 14.——Here he communes with his people. Ex. 25 : 22.——Here he displays his glory. In the preaching of the Gospel, we see the glory of his love——in prayer we feel the glory of his Spirit; the mind is enlightened, comforted, etc.——in the conversion of sinners, we see the glory of his power. "This is no other than the house of God," etc.

II. THE CHRISTIAN'S LOVE TO THE HOUSE OF GOD. "Lord, I have loved," etc. This implies

1st. *Affection*. "I have loved." Christians love God, and everything connected with him; his name, his word, his day, his ordinances, his house, his worship, his people.——This is an evidence of their regeneration; for once they hated all these things;—of the Sabbath, and its worship, they said, "O what a weariness it is! when will it be past?" Now they love God's house from the heart.

2d. *It is the love of preference*. "I had rather be a doorkeeper," etc. See verse 4, 5. "I have not sat with vain persons," etc. It is preferred to the house of mirth, etc., etc.

3d. It is loved on account of the *advantages realized by attending it*. It may have been his spiritual birthplace. Children of God are born there. "Of Zion it shall be said, this man," etc. There the believer was convinced of sin—found the Saviour—pardon through him, etc., etc.——There the presence of God is manifested——it is the banqueting house——the house of consolation, where the penitent, the afflicted, the tempted, the mourner, have been comforted and strengthened. "They that wait," etc.——It is the place of instruction, where gifts are exercised for this end. Eph. 4 : 8; Acts 9 : 31. Even the mysteries of Providence are sometimes unravelled there. Ps. 73 : 13.——Its exercises meeten for glory. The worship of God is like manna in the wilderness, like streams in the desert.

4th. *They love it because they worship with good men*. They love the

society of the brotherhood. "I am a companion of all them that fear thee," etc. "Behold how good," etc. They are fellow-travellers to heaven.

5th. *It is a practical love.* Not in word only, but in deed, and in truth.

(1.) Regular attendance. "Not forsaking," etc.

(2.) Engagement in its services, according to the ability with which God has blessed us.

(3.) Invitation to others to attend.

(4.) *Pecuniary support.* We support that which we love. ——— It is necessary. No man was ever poor for prudently and sincerely contributing to support Zion. 1 Chron. 29 : 3.

(5.) *Prayer.* Fervent and importunate. ——— "Pray for the peace," etc.

APPLICATION.

1st. How great the importance and advantages of Divine worship! David, a king, regarded it as such. ——— Christ and his apostles honored it, Luke 4 : 16; Acts 2 : 46; and so did the primitive Christians.

2d. How great the *guilt and danger* of neglecting the house of God! ——— The more valuable a thing is, the greater the folly and guilt of neglecting it. Ps. 73 : 27; Zech. 14 : 17, 19; Heb. 10 : 25.

3d. If the earthly temple is so loved, what love will the *heavenly* temple create!

THE FULNESS OF CHRIST.

"For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." — Col. 1 : 19.

In the preceding verses, the Apostle asserts the Deity of Christ, as an essential qualification for the discharge of his mediatorial office. ——— It must ever afford cause of joy to saints on earth and the redeemed in glory, that Christ by the union of the Divine and human nature was proclaimed a conqueror over sin, death, and hell, verses 14, 19, 20. ——— It is a delightful fact also, that however great and glorious the achievements of Christ, and however numerous, rich, and varied the blessings resulting from that achievement, all are available to him who believes. ——— We may gaze upon palaces of splendor and treasures of wealth—we may admire the wisdom, the prudence, and the benevolence of individuals, but we are benefited not, because we are not permitted to avail ourselves of such advantages. ——— But whatever Christ has done, and purchased, has become, by an act of stupendous grace, the property of his Church. Thousands on earth, millions in glory, can say, "And of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace." John 1 : 16.

I. THE FULNESS OF CHRIST.

The word *fulness* in the original means abundance, plenitude, exuberance, and completion; and the text implies that Christ as Mediator has all the fulness of the new covenant blessings of righteousness, grace, comfort, and glory, lodged in him by the Father, from which the saints receive all needful spiritual good. John 8 : 34; Eph. 3 : 19.

1st. There is a *personal* fulness in Christ—the fulness of the Deity. Col. 2 : 9. All the perfections of the Deity are found in him. Eternity, Rev. 1 : 8; omniscience, Rev. 2 : 23; omnipresence, Matt. 18 : 20; 28 : 20; immutability, Heb. 1 : 10–12; 13 : 8; love.

2d. This fulness is *relative*. Having a reference to the Church, called his body. Eph. 1 : 22, 23. Among his people, and in them, he displays the fulness of his righteousness, grace, and glory; and by their union and subjection to him, and their dependence on him, he is rendered a complete Mediatorial head.—It will be a fulness absolutely complete when the Mediator shall deliver up his kingdom to the Father, saying, “Here am I,” etc.

3d. There is a fulness of *proper qualification* in Christ for his Mediatorial work—as a surety—and the great High-priest. As *man* he could offer a sacrifice to God, and give satisfaction in the nature which had sinned, which satisfaction the law and justice of God demanded. Heb. 2 : 16; 1 John 2 : 1. His entire freedom from sin fitted him for the office of High-priest, Advocate, and Intercessor. 1 Pet. 1 : 19; Heb. 7 : 26. Being *God*, as well as *man*, there was and still is a sufficient virtue in all he did and suffered to answer all legal demands, to secure man’s salvation, and to vindicate and honor the Divine government.

4th. The fulness committed to Christ is *communicative*.——In him there is

(1.) *A fulness of nature*. This is clearly asserted, ver. 15–19. He is the “head of every man;” “head over all things to his Church;” “heir of all things;” everything in nature is deposited in Christ for the benefit of his people.

How vast the treasure we possess!
How rich thy bounty, King of Grace!
This world is ours, and worlds to come,
Earth is our lodge, and heaven our home.

The springing corn, the stately wood,
Grow to provide us house and food;
Fire, earth, air, water, join their force,
All nature serves us in her course.

The sun rolls round to make our day,
The moon directs our nightly way,
While angels bear us in their arms,
And shield us from ten thousand harms.

(2.) *A fulness of grace*. John 1 : 16; hence Christ is represented as a *fountain* of grace. Zech. 13 : 1; John 4 : 13, 14; 7 : 37.——In this fountain there is,

A fulness of pardoning grace. It is a new covenant blessing. Heb. 8 : 12; Matt. 26 : 28; Eph. 1 : 7.

A fulness of justifying grace. Rom. 3 : 24–26. He brought in an everlasting righteousness, Dan. 9 : 24; with it God is well pleased, Isa. 42 : 21; and he who believes is delivered from all condemnation, Rom. 8 : 1.

A fulness of adopting grace. 1 John 3 : 1 ; Gal. 4 : 6.

A fulness of the Spirit of grace. Rom. 8 : 15, 16. The Spirit is the author of spiritual gifts. Acts 2 : 4, etc., of light, comfort, joy, a witness, an earnest, etc.

A fulness of sanctifying grace. 1 Cor. 1 : 30.

A fulness of all grace in Christ *for every purpose and for every season.* "My grace is sufficient for thee;" "My God shall supply," etc.

(3.) *A fulness of eternal life and glory.* John 17 : 24 ; 10 : 28 ; Col. 3 : 34.——The ransomed spirits in heaven acknowledge Christ as the source of all their joy. Rev. 5 : 12 ; 7 : 10, 14.

II. THE NATURE AND PROPERTIES OF THIS FULNESS.

1st. *It is a very ancient one.* Hence the first promise. The patriarchs and the pious Jews in after ages, looked through the shadows, types, and sacrifices, to Jesus, the end of all ; they drew water from this well of salvation. Isa. 12 : 1, 2 ; nay, he was the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

2d. *It is a rich fulness, and very enriching.* 2 Cor. 8 : 9. "Unsearchable riches of Christ." Prophets and apostles dwell at large upon these riches, but cannot adequately describe them ; "Eye hath not seen," etc. What are mines of gold, or of jewels, compared with the jewel mine of salvation !

3d. *It is inexhaustible.* "Jesus Christ, the same," etc. Earthly sources of wealth, etc. etc., will fail. The unceasing demands of mankind will ultimately drain and dry up all earthly springs. But this fulness will never fail.

4th. *This fulness is extensively free,* with respect to its source and distribution, the persons concerned in it, and the manner in which they are blessed by it. Isa. 55 : 1, 2 ; Rev. 22 : 17.

III. HOW THIS FULNESS MAY BE SAID TO DWELL IN CHRIST.

1st. *It has an absolute being in Christ.*——It is given to him, and hence communicated to the saints ; because it is in him, they receive it. It is in him to the exclusion of every other. Jer. 2 : 13.

2d. *It implies continuance there.* This fulness delighted the Church thousands of years ago ; it does now, and will do to the end of time. It dwells there never to be exhausted——never to change. In every time, season, distress, exigency, and in death, we shall find it dwelling there, and may avail ourselves of it.——It cannot be lost or rescued from him.

IV. THE SOURCE OF ALL THIS GRACIOUS ARRANGEMENT. "*It pleased the Father.*" "His good pleasure."

1st. It is owing to the Father's good will to Christ. John 3 : 35 ; Col. 1 : 18.

2d. It is owing to the Father's good will to his people. It is for their sake, and on their account.

3d. He regarded Christ as the *most fit to be intrusted with it.* Adam, who was our former federal head, betrayed his trust ; it could not be committed to angels, therefore to Christ.

4th. It pleased the Father to make Christ *the medium of communication* of all grace to his people. If he would commune with us, it should be from the mercy seat of Jesus Christ, John 14 : 6. "He is a Mediator between God and man," etc.

APPLICATION.

Behold the amazing love of God! It pleased him to ordain in Christ such a fulness for vile sinners.

Frequently draw supplies of grace from this fulness.

EARLY PIETY THE CAUSE OF JOY.

"I rejoiced greatly, that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father."—2 JOHN 4:

It appears from verse 1, that this epistle was addressed by John to a pious female and her family. It appears that her piety was very exemplary and commanding: "Unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth." Her piety, too, was influential. God had blessed her, and made her a blessing to some of her children, who had embraced the truth. See text.——What a delightful thing it is for a parent to see his children consecrating themselves to God! How pleasing to the Church of Christ! Every parent will say, "I have no greater joy," etc. 3 John 4.——He does not say all her children, but some of them.——

I. THE CHARACTER OF THEIR PIETY: "Walking in the truth."

1st. *What are we to understand by the truth?*

It is not mere *historical truth*. A person may be well versed in the history of truth; it may interest him, and by it he may interest others; but "walking in the truth" is a very different thing.——He may also understand the nature of the Gospel, its doctrines, etc.; but walking in the truth is very different from mere theory.

It is not *philosophic or scientific truth*.——A person may understand the nature of vegetation, the nature of minerals, etc.; he may be able to analyze various chemicals; to ascertain the respective magnitude and distances of the planets; and what does it all amount to? To very little, when compared with an experimental knowledge of the truth.

It is not mere *moral truth*.——Moral truth consists in integrity, uprightness, and the corresponding virtues; and this is highly useful to society.——Moral truth to be acceptable to God must be in combination with Gospel truth, as an effect is connected with its cause.——Moral truth has nothing to do with the way of salvation; a man may possess much of this, and yet be a stranger to the truth as it is in Jesus.

But, *positively*, the word *truth* is a term by which the *Gospel*, or the evangelical system is denoted, viz.: "That Jesus of Nazareth is the true Messiah, the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners;" that he was delivered unto death for the offences of the guilty, and was raised, etc.; and that in him the Father is well pleased; that all who believe in him are saved. This is *the truth* which came by, etc., John 1 : 17, to which he himself bare witness, John 14 : 6; the truth which was attested, Matt. 8 : 17, and when he was transfigured, Luke 9 : 35, which the Apostles witnessed. — Hence, it is called "the truth," "the word of truth," "the word of the truth of the Gospel."

Hence the truth, or the Gospel, is summed up in such terms as these, "I preach unto you," etc. 1 Cor. 15 : 1-4; "This is a faithful saying," etc. 1 Tim. 1 : 15; "This is the record," etc. 1 John 5 : 11.

2d. What is implied in *walking in the truth*?

(1.) A conviction of its *adaptation* to the wants of the sinner, and of its *superiority* to every other system. It has been examined, and the verdict of the soul is, "This is the salvation I need."

(2.) *A reception of the truth.* This is by the exercise of faith. John 1 : 12. It is by faith that the soul comes in contact with Christ, and then he feels the power of the truth in the pardon of his sins, etc. etc. 2 Thess. 2 : 13.

(3.) *An experimental acquaintance with it.* Hence, a Christian does not merely profess Christ; he enjoys him—the sweetness of his love—his grace—his promises—his heaven. "We have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things;" all that is essential to his safety and welfare; he is made "wise unto salvation;" he is "wise towards God;" he knows himself; and he knows the Saviour of sinners; he that is ignorant of Him knows nothing; he that knows him knows everything. "I will give them an heart," etc. Jer. 24 : 7.

(4.) *A practical regard to the precepts* of the truth. "Walking" implies activity; it is opposed to indifference and inaction. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." The text says, "Walking in the truth, as we have received a commandment," etc. — He is a vain man who loves the creed, and hates the commandment.

(5.) Their conduct *was exemplary*. "They were found walking," etc. Their religion was visible, as well as active; it was such as might be seen and observed by others. — The seed had been sown; it had germinated; the plant came forth; it blossomed; it yielded its fruit; it was *found*; it was seen. True religion cannot long be concealed; it will be found. Acts 4 : 13.

II. THE JOY WHICH THIS PIETY PRODUCED.

Joy is especially produced on great occasions. Many things may yield pleasure, peace, and comfort; but very few things afford us joy; for that is the overflowing of the heart. — Great was the joy at the second building of the temple; at the coming of the Messiah; at his resurrection — ascension; but these were unusual events, and of the highest importance.

John had great cause for joy; he properly estimated it, and "rejoiced greatly." He was exceedingly filled with joy, as if he had found an

invaluable treasure. — His joy was like that of the father of the prodigal. Luke 15: 28, 24. It was akin to the joy of angels. Luke 15: 7, 10. Why did he *greatly rejoice*?

1st. *On account of their state.*

(1.) *Because they were "children,"* or young people. Persons in the morning of life, who, on that account, were calculated for longer and more effective service, than one converted in middle or advanced life. — The conversion of any sinner is cause for joy, but the conversion of some is more especially so, and the amount of joy is also proportionate. — The conversion of an aged sinner affords joy, chiefly on his own account; to see him plucked as a brand, etc. — But in an aged convert, there is nothing left for God but the mere dregs of life, the blind and the lame for sacrifice. The powers of his soul are wasted and destroyed. His body is a worn-out instrument in the service of sin. — But when "children" begin to walk in the truth, they consecrate to Christ the first-born of their days; the first-fruits of their reason and affections; they give him the prime of their being, the strength and energy of youth.

(2.) *They were the children of a friend whom he loved.* 5: 1. John "rejoiced with her that rejoiced." — It is delightful to see the children of strangers converted; but peculiarly so when the children of our friends return to God — those with whom we have taken sweet counsel, etc. — We think how it will minister to their comfort; how it will disappoint their fears; from what evils they will be preserved, etc. What delight can equal that which a parent feels in seeing his children rising up intelligent and amiable, and pious and useful; approved of God, and acceptable to man! If there be a sight on earth sufficient to arrest the flight of an angel in his passage to heaven, it is a father and mother surrounded with the pledges of their mutual affection, endeared by grace, as well as by nature, rising up, and calling them blessed!

2d. *On account of the blessedness which the truth confers.* The soul is more valuable than millions of worlds. Sin has ruined it, and exposed it to perdition. The truth, or the Gospel saves it, enriches it, and fills it with the hope of immortality. Those who walk in the truth enjoy all the privileges and promises which that truth records. — They are engaged in an honorable service — and they shall be honored by Christ. "If any man serve me," etc.

3d. *It is an answer to numerous and importunate prayers.* How often have parents prayed, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" — How painful is it to run in vain, etc., — to see an object of peculiar solicitude and attention, baffling every effort and disappointing every expectation! Some godly parents have warned, instructed their children, prayed for them, and perhaps departed to glory, and left them unconverted. — In many instances the dying bed has been made uneasy by the thought of leaving their children Christless in the world! Their hearts have been full of hope, with respect to themselves, but not so of their children. — Sometimes however they see their prayers answered, and then their joy is great. — Sometimes their supplications are answered long after their departure to heaven, and others live to see their children converted; and to them it gives joy.

4th. *Because it is beneficial to the Church and to the world.*——We see in such characters the friends of Jesus, when we are dead. “Instead of the fathers,” etc.——the pillars of the Church, and in some of them the angel face of some future eminent minister of the Gospel, to save souls from death.——They become the salt of the earth, the lights of the world.

APPLICATION.

Some, instead of giving joy to parents and the friends of Christ, are a continual source of grief.

Let parents not be weary in well-doing; but still advise, warn, pray.

Ungodly parents need not be surprised at the impiety of their children, and their dreadful end.

THE SINS OF YOUTH PRODUCTIVE OF THE SORROWS OF AGE.

“For thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.”—Job 13:26.

“A PRUDENT man foreseeth the evil thereof, and hideth himself.” Youth is the seedtime of spiritual happiness, or spiritual woe; after-life is the harvest time. Whatsoever a man may sow in his youth, he may reap in middle life, or old age; be they the fruits of righteousness, or the bitter effects of sin.——What an awful spectacle is an old man, about to pass into eternity, made to “*possess the iniquities of his youth!*”——How different such a scene from that mentioned, 2 Tim. 4: 6-8.——It appears that Job felt the bitterness of youthful sins in advanced age. Notice

I. THE SINS OF YOUTH.

The source of all practical sin is human depravity. The soul is fallen, and corrupt; a defiled fountain, and the streams of thought, word, and deed, will also be defiled. “The heart is deceitful,” etc. All are born with the seeds of sin lurking in their souls, and they do not long remain latent.——Hence says the Psalmist, “The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.” Ps. 58:3.——Education, parental authority, and pious example, may tend to restrain youthful transgression: but sin will break down every barrier.——It requires more than human means to counteract it. Amongst the “iniquities of youth,” perhaps the most prominent are

Disregard of parental authority——forgetfulness of God——refusal of instruction——evil company——sensuality——intemperance——vain amusements, etc.

SINS OF YOUTH ARE HIGHLY PROVOKING TO GOD.

He said to him, “Thou art of purer eyes than to be angry with iniquity,” Hab. 1:13.

1st. They are committed against his tender care and love towards them when they are least able to help themselves. Childhood is a helpless state—youth too is a time of dependence; but the Providence of God has provided for the young those who care for them, etc. etc.

2d. They are an abuse of the most vigorous part of life. Then the body is most active, healthy, and strong;—then the mind is clear, and gradually strengthening, and very susceptible;—then the talents can be better consecrated to the service of God.——But all those rich advantages are prostituted to the service of sin and Satan.

3d. It is an awful waste of precious time—that time which should be employed in gaining knowledge, purity, joy, and Christian experience for the evil days and years, when by reason of human infirmity, and perhaps afflictive pain, they will have to say, “I have no pleasure in them.” Eccl. 12: 1. An Epicure once said, “I will take care for to-day, who knows to-morrow?” Sensuality stimulated him; but spiritual wisdom should guide the young.

4th. They are contaminating in their influence. “One sinner destroyeth much good.”

5th. The sins of youth, if persisted in, will tend to confirm the person in the commission of crime.——The tenderness of human passions gradually decreases—warnings, etc., lose their influence—afflictions, judgments, death itself, at length affect not. Sin is of a most hardening nature; it petrifies the conscience till it moves not, as if seared with a hot iron, and the soul till it is past feeling. Take heed of the deceitfulness of sin.

III. THE SINS OF YOUTH LAY THE FOUNDATION FOR BITTER REMORSE, AND SOMETIMES FOR SEVERE PUNISHMENT.

It is the nature of sin to produce disappointment, sorrow, and distress, Jer. 2: 19. To see the bitter effects of sin, see Ps. 38, and 51.——The sins of youth are often the smart of age, both in respect of sorrow within, Jer. 31: 18, 19, and suffering without, ch. 20: 11. Time does not wear out the guilt of sin.

They often subject the sinner to judicial punishment in this life. The sins of youth affect

1st. *The body.* It is often wasted by disease which sin has produced. How often have blindness, lameness, etc. etc., been produced by sin which has led to quarrels, intemperance, etc. ! In some cases we see the constitution destroyed, and in others a premature old age. The individual bears in his body the effects of the “iniquities of his youth.”

2d. *The mind.* This frequently suffers more than the body. “The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmities, but a wounded spirit who can bear?” That which affects the mind is,

A painful retrospect. Scenes of wickedness—language of profanity—actions of impurity—a wicked life, and its influence upon others.

Painful and harassing conviction; of infinite love abused, rejected; done despite to the Spirit of grace—trodden under foot the Son of God.

Great loss; of holy pleasures; solid joy; loss of salvation to the present time. *Eternal life neglected for mere phantoms.*

Embarrassment, in order to gain happiness when the principal seed-time, and the richest facilities for obtaining spiritual life are gone.——How seldom is an aged man brought to repentance!—The sins of youth affect

3d. *The future*. Frequently the prospect is dark and dreadful; a “fearful looking for of judgment,” etc. A prospect, not of joy, but of pain; not of rest, but of punishment; not of light, but of darkness; not of glory, but of perdition; not of heaven, but of hell.

APPLICATION.

1st. Let the young be convinced that they need saving and renewing grace.

2d. Let those who now bear the iniquities of their youth apply to the Almighty Saviour.

THE EXPECTATION OF ETERNAL LIFE.

“Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”—Jude 21.

THIS world is full of sin, sorrow, pain, and death.——“If in this life only we had,” etc.——But the Christian has a hope of a holier, happier, sublimer, and more durable world than this. This hope supports him in every scene of earthly conflict and distress.——As the mariner tossed by the storm and tempest, hopes to gain the desired haven; as the traveller fatigued by the perils and toils of his journey, hopes to reach his own loved home; as the soldier harassed by conflict in the field of battle hopes to conquer and to wear the victor’s crown;—so the Christian in the midst of his patience labors to possess his soul, by believing and hoping that he will successfully brave all the storms of life, finish his course, fight the good fight of faith, and then lay hold on eternal life in his Father’s house above.

. How salutary the advice of the Apostle in the context! He refers to a prediction of Christ’s respecting the enemies of Christ and of Christians, “mockers in the last time,” etc., v. 17–19. And this has come to pass. Look around and see. They may be mockers of Christianity; but they have no weight. See their characters described.——But Christians are to cleave to Christ, and look for heaven, 5: 20, 21.

I. THE GREAT OBJECT OF CHRISTIAN EXPECTANCY.

1st. Believers come to this life immediately after death, and they will more fully after the resurrection of the body.

2d. *This life will be enjoyed in heaven*. The residence of Deity, his palace of splendor, the habitation of his holiness, the place where his honor dwelleth—the dwelling-place of angels and perfected spirits.——It is a place of inexpressible felicity, as it appears from its *names*. It is called *paradise*; a building, etc., mansion of God; a city;

a better country; an inheritance; a kingdom, a crown; peace, rest, and joy of the Lord.

3d. *It will be a life of complete purity.* Sin, in this world, is the great source of estrangement from God—it is that which constantly vexes and distresses the soul. — But in heaven sin can never enter to defile, Rev. 21 : 5. The Church in its triumphant state shall be faultless, Jude 24; Eph. 5 : 26–27. — They shall be “*like God*,” 1 John 3 : 2; Ps. 17 : 15.

4th. *It will be a life of perfect happiness.* There is no perfect happiness in this world. Life here is like the sea—like the atmosphere, and the mutations of weather; calms and storms, sunshine and clouds. — Sorrow is frequently the lot of God’s people. Some are afflicted under the hand of God—or mourning the loss of relatives or friends—or sunk into deep adversity. Some are weeping over the sins of others, parents over their children, pastors over their flocks, and Christian philanthropists over the wickedness of the world.

All the causes of evil will be annihilated in heaven. — Sin shall distress no more — Satan tempt no more — sickness pain no more — the tyrant oppress no more — death bereave and destroy no more. Rev. 7 : 14–17. — Their joy will surpass that of the Israelites when they listened to the announcement of Moses, “Your enemies which you see to-day, you shall see no more forever.”

5th. *It will be a life of substantial honor.* They will be raised to a “kingdom.” “Fear not,” etc. What can be received more than a kingdom? It is the highest dignity known on earth. Who can be higher than a *king*? — than a *priest*? “Kings and priests unto God,” etc. — It will be a life of honor which conquerors obtain. Crowns of victory are in reserve; a crown of righteousness, etc., etc. They shall sit upon a throne — the throne of Christ, Rev. 3 : 21; that lofty throne, that wide throne, in which he will make room for all his faithful soldiers.

6th. *It will be a life of rich enjoyment.* — Represented by a *feast*; “Many shall come from the east,” etc., etc. As a *marriage supper*; Rev. 19 : 6. — A life of enjoyment in the best society, the Deity—angels—glorified saints. — Enjoyment from *Divine Manifestation*, when we shall see God, and receive his developments of the mysteries of creation, providence, and grace. Then shall light penetrate the soul, and satisfy it, so that whatever in this world was wrapt in mystery shall be transparent and equitable there, while the soul will exclaim, “Thou hast done all things well!”

7th. To crown all, it is called *eternal life*. — Most of the Scriptural representations of heaven are combined with adjectives expressive of endless perpetuity. Hence called the everlasting kingdom, etc., the incorruptible inheritance; the exceeding and eternal weight of glory, etc., etc. — If a miser could insure his wealth for eternity, that alone would be heaven enough for him, but it is his misery when he dies, that he can carry nothing away with him. — But he who lays up treasure in heaven need not fear moth or rust, etc.; all is eternally secure. There shall be *no night there*, no danger to be apprehended, no darkness to fear. The glory of God and the Lamb are the light of

the celestial city, and the nations of them that are redeemed shall walk in the light thereof.

II. THE SOURCE OF ETERNAL LIFE: "The mercy," etc.

This is its only source, whatever be the pretensions of man. — The sacred writers uniformly so represent it—the incarnation, the ignominious sufferings and death of Jesus, are the source of eternal life; "ye know the grace," etc. — It is so ascribed, because

1st. Our Lord Jesus Christ *announced it*; and that more clearly than any who had preceded him. — See John 3: 16, 36. "He has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light." He has poured a flood of light upon those dark things. How limited was the knowledge of Socrates and Plato, and all the sages of Greece and Rome respecting a future state. — But it was amply revealed by Christ.

2d. *He has procured it.* He by fulfilling the law, enduring its curse, dying the death of the cross, satisfied all the claims of Divine justice — unbarred for man the gates of paradise. His precious blood falling upon the soul is the believer's passport to endless life; 1 John 5: 11, 12.

8d. *He bestows it*, John 17: 22; 10: 28. To the woman of Samaria he said, "The water," etc. Eternal life is his gift.

4th. *He prepares us for it.* By his Spirit he enlightens the mind to perceive and feel that sin has separated from God, and will debar from eternal life. He leads the soul to the cross of Christ—there it is stripped of vileness, and robed with Divine acceptance; and the Spirit carries on the work begun, and performs it unto the day of the manifestation of the sons of God. "Giving thanks to the Father who hath made us meet," etc.

III. THE CONDUCT OF THE EXPECTANTS OF ETERNAL LIFE.

1st. They are to *keep themselves in the love of God*. This supposes they are already interested in the love of God, and they love him. "Keeping yourselves," etc., supposes danger—danger of interruption—of the loss of the Divine favor. — To keep in the love of God, the Apostle recommends

(1.) *Faith*; v. 20. "Building up," etc. What is this but constant dependence upon Christ for salvation; resting upon the only sure foundation. This foundation is stable and durable; so are those who rest upon it. It is the *living stone*, 1 Pet. 2: 4, imparting life, energy, communion, hope, and happiness to all who rest upon it. Building implies *progression*.

(2.) *Prayer*, v. 20. "Praying in the Holy Ghost." See also Rom. 8: 26. This fetches down omnipotence from heaven to the otherwise poor, feeble Christian.

By these two, *building*, etc., *praying*, etc., he is made strong to resist temptations, from every source, to depart from the living God.

2d. *They are to look for Eternal life.*

(1.) They are to expect it as matter of absolute certainty. — It is no visionary object, but is founded on an immutable basis, Titus 1: 2. Christ not only had the words of eternal life, but the title-deeds of that

vast inheritance, and has transmitted them to all his followers, and they that believe now enter into rest.

(2.) They are to look for it with humble expectation and deep abasement.

(3.) They should wait for it with joyful and intense desire.

(4.) They should live in a daily state of preparation for it. So that when they hear the announcement, "Behold the bridegroom cometh," they may be ready and go forth to meet him.

GOD THE REFUGE OF HIS PEOPLE.

"God is a refuge for us." — Ps. 62 : 8.

"THE righteous is more excellent than his neighbor," the wicked. This remark will hold good in reference to moral character and conduct, also spiritual experience, and enjoyment. He possesses privileges and advantages of which the wicked are ignorant. When they are in trouble, where is their refuge? — When the righteous are visited by calamity, they have an unfailing refuge in God. (See the preceding verses.)

I. THE NECESSITY OF A DIVINE REFUGE.

1st. As it respects man as a sinner, he needs a refuge.

(1.) He is *guilty*, having broken the righteous law of God.

(2.) He is *condemned*, and the object of *pursuit*; Gal. 3 : 10. As a guilty transgressor, Divine justice pursues him, demanding satisfaction, etc., etc., nor will he relax that pursuit till satisfaction is obtained from him, or from an adequate substitute.

(3.) He is *helpless*. He cannot give satisfaction, Rom. 3 : 19, 20; he is weak, Rom. 5 : 6; he can give no atonement for the past, Micah 6 : 6, 7.

2d. As it respects the *believer*. Though he is saved from guilt and condemnation, yet he is not finally delivered. He still dwells in the body of sin and death; he still feels the evil heart of unbelief; he dwells in a corrupt world. — He needs a refuge,

(1.) On account of *conflict*. With his own heart — Satan, his mighty Adversary, — from the world, with its allurements, its opposition to piety, its smiles and its frowns. The believer is a soldier, and numerous and strong are the enemies with whom he has to contend, Eph. 6 : 12.

(2.) *Tribulation*. "Man is born to trouble as the sparks," etc. "Many are the afflictions," etc. Tribulation arising from *temporal losses*, *poverty*; also *personal* and *relative afflictions*; domestic *bereavements*; the slander and persecution of human tongues.

(3.) The believer will need a refuge in a *dying hour*, and at the last day.

(4.) The believer needs a refuge on account of his *helplessness*. This has been acknowledged by the most eminent saints, 2 Cor. 12 : 10. The Saviour and his apostles fully stated it, "Without me ye can do nothing," John 15 : 5. — He has to perform duties, and exercise graces connected with eternity, and therefore he needs the eternal God for his refuge, to incline his heart and strengthen it. — He has mighty, cunning, and invisible foes to contend against, and therefore he needs refuge in Him who is more than all they who are against him. — He is surrounded by numerous temptations to which thousands around him are yielding obedience, and he feels that nothing can preserve him but the arm of Omnipotence.

II. THE NATURE AND PROPERTIES OF THIS REFUGE.

A refuge is a place of safe retreat from danger, where a person may be protected, and escape the pursuit of an enemy. Hence the "cities of refuge," Numb. 35 : 13, etc. God is called the refuge of his people, Deut. 33 : 27 ; Isa. 25 : 4.

1st. *God is a refuge for the guilty.* Even as the cities of refuge were provided for the guilty manslayer, — so Jehovah is a refuge in and through Christ against conscience, wrath, and the law, which accuse and pursue guilty sinners. Christ is the way to the Father, and the only way, Acts 4 : 12. It is here the most guilty — the vilest of the vile — find refuge and succor. Heb. 6 : 18. He pardons, etc.

2d. He is a refuge for his people in conflict. Such he was to David, 2 Sam. 22 : 1-3 ; Ps. 142 : 4-6. He will give grace sufficient to war a good warfare — to mortify the deeds of the body — to resist Satan — to conquer the world. Hence he has prepared spiritual armor, Eph. 7, and he will "teach our hands to war," etc. He will be present in every engagement, etc. He is the fortress and garrison, Prov. 18 : 10. — Hence the triumph of the Apostle, Rom. 8 : 31, 35, etc.

3d. *God is a refuge in tribulation.* See Ps. 9 : 9 ; 59 : 16 ; Jer. 17 : 19. He stands by the furnace, and tempers the blast. — He delivers from trouble in answer to prayer — if not, he gives strength according to the day — he sweetens the bitter cup — and sanctifies every visitation. "All things ~~work~~ work," etc. Ps. 41 : 1-3.

4th. He is a refuge of strength for the *weak and helpless*. The Father will defend his child — the Great Shepherd his helpless lamb, or wandering sheep, Isa. 41 : 10 ; "God is our refuge and strength." Ps. 46 : 1. He inclines the soul to duty ; by his Spirit he animates it — he gives strength and ability when most needed, Ps. 29 : 11.

5th. He will be a refuge in death, and at the judgment day. Then will he be recognized as a God in covenant, and he will save his people.

APPLICATION.

1st. Behold the excellency of this refuge. It is suitable — strong and effectual ; all are safe there — it is easy of access — it is unfailing.

2d. To enjoy this refuge we must fly to it ; must be in it. A mere profession will not do.

3d. How awful the state of the sinner ! No refuge. "Without God, without Christ," etc.

LOVE TO GOD AND THE DIVINE APPROVAL.

"But if any man love God, the same is known of him." — 1 COR. 8 : 3.

NOTHING on earth is of so much consequence to man as the Divine approbation. "He that believeth hath the witness in himself;" that he loves God, because he first loved him; his heart has been directed into the love of God, 2 Thess. 3 : 5, and the "love of God abideth in him." The Divine Being saith, "I love them that love me." This is more valuable than thousands of gold and silver. Compared with an interest in God's loving-kindness, all earthly possessions are mere vanity and vexation of spirit.

The text is to be considered as a part of a long parenthesis, comprising several cautions and advice to the infant church at Corinth, and designed to suggest proper modes of conduct to Christians dwelling amongst Heathen idolaters.

I. THE CHARACTER HERE DESCRIBED.

Love is a gracious affection of the soul which induces delight in God, admiration of his nature, perfections, and operations, a desire to enjoy his favor, a disposition to praise him, and to promote his glory.

In 1 Cor. 13, the nature of *love* is given. Her incomparable painter has there drawn her at full length in all her fair proportions. Every attitude is full of grace; every lineament, of beauty. The whole delineation is perfect, entire, wanting nothing. — It "suffereth long," v. 4-7. "Love never faileth." When tongues and prophecies cease, love shall shine and sing in the kingdom of heaven. Faith will go with us to the gate of paradise, and will bid us farewell; but white-robed charity will enter with us through the gates into the city, and never leave us. Knowledge may fade away, but love shall flourish in immortal bloom. — Love is the master-principle of all good society. It is the holy bond which connects man with man — angel with angel — angels with men, and all with God. Love is an emanation from God's own purity; "for God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." — Love sweetens and sanctifies every privilege, possession, and connection. "And now abideth faith, hope, charity," etc.

More particularly observe

1st. *Love is connected with knowledge.* There must be a knowledge of the Divine nature, attributes, and his purposes of grace and mercy, or there can be no genuine love. How can any one love a person of whom he has no knowledge? "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee;" and trust or faith worketh by love. The more a believer knows of God, the more he will love him.

2d. *Love is connected with faith.* Faith is that principle by which the soul rests on Christ for salvation — by which the soul is brought to enjoy pardon, and every spiritual blessing. This enjoyment as granted

by our gracious God, certainly produces love to him. "We love him because he first loved us." Hence the argument of the Apostle, Rom. 5 : 1-5.

3d. *Love produces obedience.* "If ye love me keep my commandments."——Love teaches us to recognize the relation in which we stand to God as children to a parent, and as subjects to a prince.——Love is an active operative principle, studious of manifesting its acquiescence in the will, and of testifying its submission to the authority of its great object.——Hence it is not merely professional, but practical, James 2 : 14-17. Love produces obedience to all the *precepts of Christ*, Ps. 119 : 6; 1 John 5 : 3.——It produces *brotherly love*, 1 John 4 : 7, 8, 11, 20, 21.——It leads to *active exertions* for the prosperity of Zion. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem," etc. It produces love to immortal souls. It pants to "save souls from death, and to hide a multitude of sins."——To this end, if the love of God abideth in us, we shall be assiduous in the cultivation of our talents, in the improvement of our time, in the acquisition of knowledge; in devoting ourselves, our property, our influence, and our all to the service of the great Redeemer.

4th. *Love to God produces submission.* It rebels not at trying dispensations; it resists not the appointments of a wise and holy providence.——It will not permit us to call in question any part of God's government, or to indulge a doubt respecting the rectitude of his proceedings. Filial affection says, "Father, not my will," etc. "This affliction, this bereavement, has been arranged by my Father in Heaven—he is infinitely wise, infinitely good—he does all things well—I submit."

5th. Love to God is necessary to *Christian communion*; 1 John 1 : 3. All true Christians love God, and one another.——Communion consists in a joint participation of the same views and feelings.——How then can any one who does not love Christ relish the society of his disciples, or enjoy communion with them, or unite in their religious services? How unpleasant would be the situation of such a man when surrounded by a circle of lively Christians!——He would feel like a deaf man at a concert of music, or like a blind man in a gallery of pictures, surrounded by others whose senses are gratified, and whose admiration is excited.

6th. Love to God is necessary to *the enjoyment of heaven*. If the society of the pious, if their praises, their duties, their privileges and pleasures, cannot, by the sinner, be relished on earth, they cannot be in heaven.——He loves the world and its vanities, but these will not be in heaven. He would, therefore, feel like a stranger there; he would wish to return.——*

* "You doubtless recollect the unhappy man who was executed in this town for murder, about ten years since. While in his dungeon, after listening to the description which inspired writers give of heaven, he told me that he should rather remain in that dungeon through eternity, than go to such a heaven as he had heard described. Now I appeal to those of you who do not love the Lord Jesus, whether your feelings are not, in some degree at least, similar to his? If you hesitate to admit this, permit me to make the following supposition. Suppose some town in our country should be made, as nearly as possible, to resemble heaven. Suppose all the inhabitants, without exception, to be not only pious, but eminently so. Suppose all worldly amusements, all political discussions, all commercial transactions, all secular conversation, to be banished from among them; while the presence of Christ should

II. THE DIVINE APPROVAL OF SUCH CHARACTERS: "The same is known of him."

1st. *He is made to know*, i. e. he is taught of God. This sense is given by several commentators. The love of God which rules in his heart, is the result of the Spirit's teaching.—— And he shall know more experimentally of the doctrines, the privileges, the joys, and the hopes of God's salvation.

2d. *He is approved and accepted of God.* Job 23 : 10; Ps. 1 : 6; 138 : 6; Nahum 1 : 7. The Psalmist appeals to God, Ps. 139 : 23, 24. It is God's prerogative to know and understand the inward state of Christians.—— He infallibly ascertains the principles by which the saint is actuated, and judges him to be well affected.—— We are obliged to judge of men's motives by their actions, but God judges of actions by their motives. He discerns and dissects the intents of the heart, and determines with infallible precision the quality of motives.

"The same is known of Him," the Creator, the Governor of the universe, the Lord of all, the God of grace. What an honor! an earthly worm to be approved by such a Being!

"The same is known of Him," though he may write bitter things against himself, and his spiritual attainments may be very low.

"The same is known of Him," though ignorant—— though poor, and mean in the estimation of the world. "Men look at the outward appearance," etc.

"The same is known of Him" in all his troubles and sorrows—— he will be *when he dies*—— he will be *when God judges the world*. Oh, what a glorious privilege — to be known of God!

APPLICATION.

Encouragement,—to the weak but sincere believer. Their moral condition is not to be judged by their intellectual powers or natural acquisitions.—— Many Christians doubt of their safety because they possess so little light, are so weak in understanding, and deficient in recollection.—— Light is good as the medium of action, but only so *when* sanctified by the Spirit, or impregnated with love.

It teaches us to aspire after the Divine approbation. Mere speculative knowledge will avail nothing, but love which is "the fulfilling of the law."

It is alarming to the sinner. "If any man love not," etc.

be enjoyed in a peculiar manner, and all the employment should be to love and praise and serve him. Would you joyfully choose that town, in preference to all other places, for your earthly residence? Could you, while retaining your present character, while destitute of the love of Christ, cheerfully leave every thing behind, and live happily in such a place? If you reply, No; then it is much more evident that you could not be happy in heaven. If you reply, Yes; we could be happy in such a situation,—I ask, why then do you not, so far as is possible, live such a life of religion here? Why are not those who appear to love Christ most sincerely, and to praise him more ardently, your chosen companions?"—PAYSON, of America.

THE COMMENCEMENT AND PROGRESS OF RELIGION.

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."—PHIL. 1 : 6.

"THE Gospel is the power of God to salvation." It changes the state of the sinner, giving him the pardon, the liberty, and the joys of the Gospel. — It changes the disposition also; substituting in his soul the fruits of the Spirit for the lusts of the flesh. — This was especially the case with the Church at Philippi. A good work had been begun in their souls, which they exemplified in their conduct. — To the Apostle Paul they were remarkably affectionate. They sustained him while first preaching the Gospel at Macedonia, when no other church contributed to the same benevolent object. The same noble course they adopted twice, while he was laboring in Thessalonica, ch. 4 : 15, 16; again while at Corinth, 2 Cor. 11 : 9; when a prisoner at Rome, they sent Epaphroditus with a present, lest he should suffer want in his bonds. He sent this Epistle back by him. — It is remarkable that this is the only Epistle in which no censure is either expressed or implied against any of the members. — Notice

I. THE WORK OF GRACE IN THE SOUL: "*that he which hath begun a good work in you,*" etc.

It may be read *a good work among you*, referring to the planting of the Church among them. He who hath planted Christianity in the world will preserve it as long as the world stands. Christ will maintain the Church till the mystery of God shall be finished, and the mystical body completed. He has built that Church upon a rock, and the gates, etc. — But the language may be more properly applied to individuals who have Christ formed in the heart, the hope of glory.

1st. *Grace in the heart is called "work."* This word has a great fullness of meaning: it implies operation, and labor, and in a spiritual sense, great difficulty. Redemption is called God's work, John 9 : 4. Faith is called the work of God, John 6 : 29; faith is called a work which is to be carried on with power, 2 Thess. 1 : 11. Salvation is to be worked out, Phil. 2 : 12, with fear and trembling. All Christian duties are comprehended in this description, "The work of the Lord," 1 Cor. 15 : 58. This work may refer

(1.) To the work of *conviction*. Like those on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2 : 37; or like the Jailor, Acts 16 : 30. The truth arrests the attention—rouses the conscience—convinces the judgment, and deeply pierces the soul with conviction of guilt and ruin.

(2.) The work of *enlightenment*. By this conviction is matured. Light comes from the word—from the Spirit—from heaven, and irradiates the dark chambers of the soul. — Enlightenment, so that the nature and evil of sin are understood; the guilt and curse of sin are felt; and the sinner is overwhelmed with a view of his total helplessness.

Enlightenment respecting the ability, fitness, willingness, and freeness of salvation in the sufferings, death, resurrection, and advocacy of Jesus Christ.

(3.) The work of gracious *liberation by faith in Jesus Christ*. Pardon of sin—justification—adoption—all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, etc.

(4.) The work of regeneration. A new creation. New heart, right spirit. All the powers of the soul refined and sublimated by the power of the Spirit. The heart is now soft—conscience susceptible, affections spiritual. The world and its pleasures, sin and its inventions, are now hated; “fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.”

(5.) The work of *faith, labor of love, and patience of hope*, 1 Thess. 1:3. As long as the Christian lives, he lives by faith, Gal. 2:20. The love of Christ constraineth him to every good work. Hope anticipates the heavenly inheritance; the whole operation beautifully stated, Rom. 5:1-5.

2d. *It is an internal work*; “begun a good work in you.” It has to do with the soul. — It is more than having a creed, a system of religious notions; it is more than mere profession; more than attention to ceremonial observances. “Neither shall they say, Lo, here,” etc. Luke 17:21; Matt. 5:20; Rom. 2:28, 29.

3d. *It is a good work*. It is called “a good work in the text; “a good thing,” 1 Kings 14:13; it is called “a good part.” “Mary hath chosen,” etc. — The world and Satan represent religion as a bad thing, as tending to make men melancholy, etc. — But what says God—and the Bible—and true Christians—and conscience—in affliction—in a dying hour?

Well may religion in the soul be called a *good work*; for it makes good the heart, the life, etc. — It is the living source and vital principle from which all good works proceed and flow; the grace of God in the heart is the root of all true holiness in the life — it makes like God — it fits for the enjoyment of God — it yields good support and rich consolation in adversity, afflictions, death — it sends forth a revenue of good to a dark world — it is the earnest of good things to come — it leads to the possession of heavenly and eternal good.

4th. *It is a Divine work*. “He who hath begun.” It is of God’s beginning. We could not begin it ourselves; for we are by nature “dead in trespasses and sins:” and what can dead men do towards raising themselves to life? — It is God who quickens them who are dead, Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13. — Is this good work begun in you? Remember it is all of grace. Enlightened by his Spirit — accepted by his grace — the very instruments, as preaching, etc., are under Divine direction. “Neither is he that planteth,” etc. See Eph. 2:8, 9, etc.; Rom. 11:6, 35, 36.

II. THE CERTAINTY OF ITS CONSUMMATION: “Being confident,” etc. — Observe

1st. The work of grace is but begun and carried on in this life; it is not finished here; it is not perfect here. As long as we are in this imperfect state, there is still something more to be done. We shall

always find cause to *go forward, to grow, to increase, to abound more and more*. Hence religion is progressive in its nature, like vegetation, like light increasing unto the perfect day, like the erection of a building, like the growth of a child.

2d. *That God will perform this work*, or carry it on until the day of Jesus Christ. If he did not undertake the carrying on, and finishing it, it would lie forever unfinished. He who began it must perform it. For it is carrying on the work in a soul that *was fallen*—that is surrounded by *potent enemies and dangers*—that, in the abstract, is *helpless*—that is liable to *despond* and to be overwhelmed with despair. And what is the end of this great work? It is infinite glory. Therefore, to carry on an infinite work, requires infinite power and love.

It is certain that he will do this. "Being confident." It is evident from the following considerations that he will finish and crown the work of his own hands; "as for God, his work is perfect."

(1.) *From its actual commencement*. "He hath begun a good work." Does he plant, and then destroy? Does he build, and then pull down? Does he give life, and then cause death? "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth." "This is the will of God, even your sanctification."

(2.) *His own gracious purpose*. "Father, I will," etc. John 17:24; Eph. 1:4, 5. Hence his gracious design. Gal. 1:4. Hence the prayers of Christ that his people might be kept from the evil of the world, and preserved to life everlasting. John 16:15, 16.

(3.) *His infinite love to them*. "Loved the Church, and gave himself for it." "Laid down his life for his sheep." Will he not therefore carry it on?

(4.) *His promises*, of care, support, guidance, till death.

(5.) *His faithfulness*. "Faithful is he who has promised."

(6.) *He has carried the work on in millions of souls*. From Adam till now. In the patriarchal, prophetic, apostolic age, and since, he has performed this work. Look up to heaven, and see. Rev. 7:9.

Lastly. The work of religion in the heart will never be perfect till the day of Jesus Christ, the day of his appearance, when he shall come to judge the world, and finish the great work of mediation. Then shall he appear the second time without a sin-offering unto salvation—that is, to consummate the salvation of all his people. Heb. 9:28.

APPLICATION.

1st. Is the good work begun in you?

2d. Confide in Divine operations for the successful issue of that good work.

3d. Frequently think of that glorious consummation, when the top-stone etc.; when you shall be without sin.

JOSHUA A TYPE OF CHRIST.

"And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him; and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the Lord commanded Moses." — DEUT. 34 : 9. See also JOSH. 1 : 1-5; ACTS 7 : 45; ILIAS. 4 : 8.

ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God. — Those persons who were chosen by the Divine Being, inspired by his Spirit, or otherwise qualified for office, are worthy of our meditation; and more especially so, when those persons were typical of Christ. Although Joshua, whose piety, courage, and disinterestedness, are conspicuous throughout his whole history, is not expressly mentioned in the New Testament as a type of the Messiah, yet he is generally allowed to have been a very eminent one. — Observe,

In what respect was Joshua typical of Christ.

I. IN HIS DIVINE APPOINTMENT.

This appointment is mentioned, Josh. 1 : 1, 2; Numb. 27 : 16-20. — Christ also was appointed — as the servant of the Lord, and the Saviour of men he was sent, delegated. Isa. 42 : 1. "Him hath God the Father sealed." See Heb. 1 : 1, 2. "Lo, I come to do thy will," etc.

II. IN THE GLORIOUS IMPORT OF HIS NAME.

Joshua and Jesus have the same comprehensive meaning. The former in the Hebrew, and the latter in Greek, signify *Saviour** Joshua was so called because eminently destined, and raised up to deliver Israel, and to conquer their enemies. — How applicable this name to Christ! "Thou shalt call," etc. Matt. 1 : 21. He saves from the effects of *sin, guilt, condemnation, wretchedness, from the world, death, the grave, eternal perdition*. He saves them fully — freely — everlastingly.

To effect this salvation he *suffered* — he died as a *sacrifice*, and he ever liveth, etc.

☞ Mark this difference in their interpositions. The salvation of Joshua was temporal — that of Christ was eternal — the former was but for a *few* — the latter for a "great multitude," etc.

III. AS THE SERVANT AND SUCCESSOR OF MOSES.

Joshua is called the minister of Moses, Ex. 24 : 13. By being a servant he was prepared to become his successor. He was a faithful servant, obedient and submissive to the will of God. — Jesus was first the servant of the law before he procured the salvation of men. He became the servant of the ceremonial law before he abolished it. —

* "Joshua, Jesus. This name is compounded of Yah, Jah, a name of God, and Houshala (Hosea) the Saviour, and so it imports Jehovah the Saviour. In this sense the ancients understood it. So Eusebius, of the third century, says: The name of Jesus means the salvation of God. For Isoua among the Hebrews is salvation, and among them the son of Nun is called Joshua. And Iasouz is the salvation of Jah, i. e., salvation of God." — BIBLE COMPANION.

As to the moral law, he obeyed its precepts, he endured its penalty. He "fulfilled all righteousness;" he is "the Lord our righteousness."

As Joshua succeeded Moses, so Christ and his Gospel succeeded the whole Mosaic ritual. — How superior the Gospel — simple — easy! "The law (a yoke, etc.) came by Moses," etc.

IV. IN HIS QUALIFICATIONS AND CONSECRATION TO OFFICE.

The call of Joshua was divinely or miraculously announced to Moses, and miraculously made known to himself. He possessed, too, the most eminent qualifications for office. The text shows that he was richly endowed with the most distinguished graces. He was full of the spirit of wisdom and fortitude. — Moses laid his hands on the head of Joshua, before his death, and prayed Israel's God to enrich him plentifully with his Spirit.

The call of Christ was ancient as eternity. How wonderfully fitted for his office! None in the universe but He was fitted for this office of saving sinners. The divinity alone was not sufficient. Salvation could not be effected without obedience; divinity, as such, could not obey; it could not be accomplished without suffering; divinity as such could not suffer. Hence a body was prepared for the great Redeemer. "God was manifest in the flesh." Hence our Divine Joshua was consecrated to his office in Jordan, and his qualifications, divine and human, were conspicuous in the whole of his undertaking, Isa. 11 : 1, etc.

V. JOSHUA WAS THE COMMANDER AND LEADER OF HIS PEOPLE.

As such, he was to publish God's law, and to recommend it by his own practice. In their journeys, in their marches to battle, he was to conduct them. — To the land of Canaan he was to introduce them. — So Christ is represented as the Commander and Leader of his people, Isa. 55 : 4; see also Deut. 18 : 15. He yielded perfect obedience to the law; his example was that of sinless perfection. He was fairer than the children of men. — And having suffered and died on the cross, he has been exalted as Lord of all his people, who own him as their Captain, Heb. 2 : 10. He leads them forth to spiritual warfare, etc., etc.

VI. JOSHUA CONDUCTED THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL THROUGH JORDAN.

It was at the river Jordan that Jehovah publicly magnified Joshua before all Israel. It was at the same renowned river that God the Father publicly magnified Jesus, when entering to the performance of his sacred office, Matt. 3 : 16, 17. And God will honor all those who imitate his conduct there, Rom. 6 : 4; Col. 2 : 12. — Jordan is an emblem of death. And as Joshua successfully conducted Israel through that river, so will Jesus conduct his flock, his army, through the river of death which separates this dark world from the inheritance of light.

Dark river of death, that is flowing
Between the bright city and me,
Thou boundest the path I am going,
O how shall I pass over thee?

The glory from Calvary streaming
 Will shine o'er the cold sable wave;
 And the faith that is oftentimes beaming,
 May burst through the gloom of the grave.

The ark of the covenant preceded the people of Israel, and they went courageously and safely over.——When a Christian dies, the Saviour visits him, and presents to the eye of his faith the New Covenant of Redeeming love—and that bears him up amid the “swellings of Jordan.”

VII. JOSHUA OVERTHREW THE WALLS OF JERICO.

It was done by an instrumentality apparently mean and insignificant, Josh. 6 : 5.——Jericho, with its lofty walls and powerful battlements, typified the strongholds of Satan, as opposed to Jesus, the Captain of our salvation. As the walls of Jericho fell, so must the strongholds of Satan fall.——As they fell by means of the sound of rams' horns, which at first excited the contempt and ridicule of the inhabitants, so by the preaching of the Gospel, which is foolishness unto men, shall all the strongholds of sin, of error, of superstition and idolatry, be cast down. The kingdoms of this world shall yield to the sceptre of Immanuel, and crown him Lord of all, 1 Cor. 1 : 18-28.

VIII. JOSHUA WAS THE MEANS OF SAVING RAHAD. Josh. 6 : 22.

She had been a most abandoned character, a harlot, Heb. 11 : 31. As such, she was a striking type of the character of the Gentile world.——She became one of God's people——and that typified the bringing in of the Gentiles, Eph. 2 : 11, 12.——She suspended from her window a scarlet thread as a signal of her preservation from the general destruction. It is by the blood of Christ that the saints are delivered.

IX. JOSHUA WAS A CONQUEROR.

So was Christ. Joshua had numerous and potent enemies to encounter. So Christ contended with numerous and powerful foes, not flesh and blood, but principalities and powers, Eph. 6 : 12. Joshua always triumphed, aided by his God.——So did Christ triumph over all the powers of darkness; he bruised Satan under his feet, etc., Col. 2 : 13, 14; Rev. 1 : 18.

X. JOSHUA CONDUCTED HIS PEOPLE INTO THE LAND OF CANAAN.

Joshua entered, and divided the land among the tribes of Israel, Josh. 14 : 1. So Christ our Forerunner entered and took possession of Canaan for his people—he has prepared mansions.——Canaan was a promised land; so is heaven.——Canaan was the loveliest spot on earth; heaven is the loveliest spot in the universe. Canaan was dearly bought, the result of many victories—heaven was not purchased by such corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.——Israel lived long in the possession of Canaan; and the spiritual Israel of God shall dwell forever in the Canaan above.

THE ADVENT OF CHRIST.

"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many."—HEB. 9:28.

EVERYTHING respecting Christ is interesting. "His name is as precious ointment poured forth." His moral character is "altogether lovely;" "grace was poured into his lips," and he "spake as never man spake." His miracles were wonderful and godlike; his doctrine distilled as the dew, and dropped as the gentle rain. "All bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded from his lips."——If these things were so interesting, how much more so his mediation,——which brought glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will to men.——The subject of the text is,

CHRIST'S FIRST APPEARANCE. Christ was once offered, etc.

I. The *cause* of his first appearance was the *boundless love of God*. John 3:16, and many other passages.

II. His first coming was *marked by poverty, suffering, and reproach*.

How mean and poor the circumstances of his birth, his youth, his manhood, and his whole life!—"Foxes have holes," etc. What sufferings and reproaches he endured from his enemies! Heb. 12:3, etc. etc.

III. His first coming *terminated in Sacrifice*. Indeed this was the great design of his coming. Heb. 10:4-7.

(1.) His sacrifice *was for sin*; "offered to bear the sins of many." The law had been broken by man—the curse, as its penalty, incurred, Gal. 3:10.

(2.) His sacrifice *was painful and ignominious*. He had a bitter cup to drink. Men tortured his body by scourging, laceration, crucifixion.——God forsook him, wrath came upon him to the uttermost.——Justice demanded complete satisfaction.

(3.) His sacrifice *was vicarious*. It was substitutionary. Such are all ordinary sacrifices. So the sacrifice of Christ is represented, Heb. 9:25; Isa. 53, and many passages.——Behold him, Christians, wounded for your transgressions, and bruised for your iniquities; wounded till life expires, and bruised till his heart is broken. My sins were in the load that crushed that heart, and had it not been that the punishment which they deserved was borne by him, they would have made me miserable forever.

(4.) His sacrifice *was perfect*. "Once offered." It is called, "one sacrifice." The repetition of the Jewish sacrifices was an indication of their imperfection, Heb. 7:27; 9:25. The sacrifice of Christ was *one*.

Its perfection arose from *Christ's dignity*. He was God manifest in the flesh; the Son of God with power. This dignity of perfection is acknowledged, Heb. 1:3-5.——Had not Christ's sacrifice been

associated with Divinity, his death would not have been superior to that of a Christian martyr. — If the whole intelligent creation had been brought as a sacrifice to the altar of Divine justice; and if every nerve, every muscle, every bone, and every heart had received the inflictions of Divine fury, until one deep and universal groan had rolled its unutterable import to the throne of God, the whole would have been a worthless sacrifice. Still as vivid would have been the lightnings, as loud the thunders of Sinai; still as dreadful would have been the accusations of conscience; still as awful would have been the frowns of justice; still as black would have been the darkness of eternity. The victim must be no other than "Jesus the only begotten Son of God," the "brightness," etc.

This perfection arose from *successful execution*. Prophecies bearing upon this sacrifice were fulfilled to the letter. With what patience, submission, willingness, Christian heroism, he met the hour—with what meekness he approached the cross—with what courage he drank the cup—with what energy he encountered the foe—with what triumph he closed the scene!

It was perfect in its *efficacy*. It was what the circumstances of man required—what Divine justice demanded—and it magnified God's law, and satisfied all his claims. "Mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other."

It was perfect in *sufficiency*. That atonement offered by Christ was sufficient for the Patriarchal, the Levitical, the Prophetical, the Apostolical age, and every succeeding age, till now. It reaches back to the fall of Adam; it extends forward to the period when the angel shall swear by him that liveth forever and ever, that time shall be no longer; and the effect of that sacrifice shall be felt when time shall be swallowed up in eternity. All that is now visible in God's creation shall be changed, or vanish; but our great High Priest has obtained an "unchangeable priesthood," and "he ever liveth," etc.

Christ was offered to *bear the sins of MANY*. Hence its sufficiency, "He is the propitiation for our sins," etc. He is said to have "tasted death for every man." — The result of the mediatorial scheme is stated by the Apostle John in language the most gratifying to the spirit of charity, Rev. 7: 9, 10. The worth of the Lamb shall be sung not by a few solitary individuals. That song shall not rise before the throne low and feeble. It shall be the song of the nations of them that are saved, and shall be louder than the sound of many waters, and of mighty thunderings.

IV. *His sacrifice was followed by exaltation.* Heb. 2: 9; Phil. 2: 9, 10, etc.

1st. He was exalted as an *Intercessor*. Heb. 7: 25; 1 John 2: 1; Rom. 8: 34.

2d. He is exalted as a *Prince and a Saviour*. Acts 5: 31. From his throne he dispenses the gifts of repentance, pardon, and justification. As a Prince upon that throne, he governs the Church—the world.

3d. He is exalted to honor and felicity. "Who for the joy," etc. Heb. 12: 2. The joy of seeing "the travail of his soul," etc. — the

conversion, the salvation, and glorification of myriads of sinners, who, through eternity, as the most valuable gems, shall adorn his Mediatorial crown.

Lastly. The benefits of this Sacrifice are available.

1st. By feeling our need of it.

2d. By renouncing all other refuges.

3d. By the exercise of faith in Christ alone. "He that believeth," etc.

APPLICATION.

1st. How secure are all those who believe! Christ's work is perfect.

2d. Those who perish will not only be without excuse, but become the subjects of awful punishment. "He that despised Moses's law," etc.

THE SECOND ADVENT OF CHRIST.

"Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." — **HEB. 9: 28.**

THE expectation of any important event generally produces interest and excitement. — This was the case with the Jews when slaves in Egypt — or when captives in Babylon. — The first advent of Jesus as announced immediately after the fall of man, was an object of special interest to angels and to men. "When he bringeth his first begotten," etc. **HEB. 1: 6.** "Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad." "Kings and prophets desired to see," etc. — The second appearance of Christ will be a most important event, and pregnant with the most interesting and solemn results to saints and sinners. It is ever so represented by the sacred writers; an event earnestly desired by the righteous — an event terrible to the ungodly, who have, during their career of iniquity, a "fearful looking for of judgment," **HEB. 10: 27.** — The subject of the text is,

THE SECOND ADVENT OF CHRIST. "*Unto them that look for him,*" etc.

1st. *This is a fact established,*

(1.) *By reason and conscience.* God is the moral Governor of this world; all creatures are responsible to him; he therefore, who made us and governs us, has a perfect right to summon us to give an account of our actions done on the platform of human existence, and at a period, and in that manner, which his infinite wisdom may devise. — The justice of God is not clearly displayed in the dispensation of things in the present state. The righteous, who are the excellent of the earth, are afflicted, while wicked men generally prosper. — The consciences of all men point to a future state of retribution; witness the consternation and dread of Belshazzar and Felix.

(2.) *By the uniform testimony of Scripture.* Enoch predicted it, Jude 5: 14, 15. Abraham reasoned about it, Gen. 18: 25. Job exulted in the expectancy of it, Job 19: 25-27. The Psalmist sublimely describes it, Ps. 50: 1, etc. It is also asserted by Solomon, Eccles. 3: 17; 12: 14. With the assurance of his second appearance for glorious purposes, Christ comforted the hearts of his disciples, John 14: 2, 8; and when he ascended, angels declared, Acts 1: 11. Besides, the day is appointed, Acts 17: 31; see also 2 Cor. 5: 10.

2d. *The Second Advent of Christ shall be very different from his first appearance.* "Without sin."

(1.) *He shall not then come in a state of humiliation.*——At the first he took on him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh.——He passed through all the circumstances of humble birth, though he was God manifest in the flesh.——He was subject to poverty, hunger, thirst, fatigue, reproach, and persecution. Then he "made himself of no reputation," etc.——He will not come to be "mocked and set at nought" by Herod; not to be buffeted, and scourged, and spit upon, and crowned with thorns.

(2.) *He shall not come to expiate sin.* "Without sin;" or *without a sin-offering.* At his first appearance the guilt of men was charged upon him as upon a surety who had undertaken their cause. "God laid help upon one that was mighty;" and therefore he "bare the sins of many." "He who knew no sin was made sin (a sin-offering) for us." "He bare our sins in his own body on the tree."——But the sacrifice once offered for the sins of many, will forever perfect them that are sanctified, and "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." The ends of justice are fully answered; and having died for sin once, he dieth no more. Gethsemane's agony and bloody sweat; the ignominy, the shame, the bodily and mental pangs of Calvary's cross, he will endure no more.——"It is finished."

3d. *The Second Advent of Christ will be magnificent and glorious.*

More glorious than the return of the mightiest conqueror from the field of triumph——more glorious than the proclamation and coronation of kings and emperors.——These occurrences are but faint emblems of "the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.——It will be magnificent and glorious as to

(1.) *His person.* That will be so glorious as to be "admired," 2 Thess. 1: 10. He will not appear then as the subject of poverty and lassitude, and contempt; "having no form," etc.; "his visage so marred more than any man's," etc.; but he shall come "with power and with great glory," Matt. 24: 30. He will come with a personal glory and majesty exceeding that described in Isa. 6: 1-4, or that by Daniel 7: 9, or that by John, Rev. 1: 13, etc.——Compared with Christ's power, the power of all earthly kings is but the power of the moth; and compared with his glory, the splendor of regal pomp is but the glimmering of the glowworm. He shall come with the power of Omnipotence. That power by which he made the universe, he shall bring with him to punish his foes. He shall come with all the glory of his perfections shining brighter than ten thousands suns. He shall come with the glory

of his spotless and exalted humanity, and with all the glorious majesty of his divinity.

(2.) *In attendants.* He will appear as a King, with a retinue of "mighty angels;" making his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire, Matt. 25 : 31.——If when the law was given at Sinai by the ministration of angels, the fire and smoke so filled the people with awe and dread, what will be the manifestation of the Son of God when he shall come in the glory of his Father, and of all the holy angels?——As in the days of his flesh, "Jesus was seen of angels," so they will be his servants then. They are called *reapers*, Matt. 13 : 39; they will sever the wicked, etc., Matt. 13 : 49; they are to be witnesses of his acts of grace and power, Luke 12 : 8; Rev. 3 : 5, etc.

(3.) *In office.* He will be the Judge of all. There is a solemnity and a majesty connected with this office which is overwhelming. He will judge immortals—upon his judgment will be suspended the salvation and perdition of the myriads congregated before his bar.——Great must be the excitement of the man who stands before the bar of an earthly judge, to be tried for his life, etc. etc.

4th. *The Advent of Christ will be gracious.* "Unto salvation."

The design of his appearance will be to *complete the salvation of his people*, and this will divest judgment of all its terrors.——The salvation of the Church is not yet completed—the bodies of those who are in glory are yet in the grave—part of the Church are in heaven—part on earth, etc. etc.——He will come.

(1.) *To redeem their bodies from the grave.* The resurrection of the body is so abundantly attested and confirmed by the resurrection of Christ, that the reunion of the component parts of our nature is rendered a matter of absolute and infallible certainty, 1 Cor. 15 : 55-57; Phil. 3 : 21.——Until this period arrives, a part of the temple of the Holy Ghost lies in ruins, a part of the curse denounced on man remains uncanceled. Until the resurrection the enemies of Christ will not be completely vanquished; but that event will destroy death, and him that had the power of it, even Satan. Then shall the saints be rescued from the iron barriers of the tomb, and rise into immortal health and beauty; and they shall be subject to sin, and death, and corruption, no more.

(2.) Having raised the bodies of the righteous, they shall be *gathered to his right hand as the sheep of his fold*, as the "blessed" of the Lord. "And they shall gather," Matt. 24 : 31. They were dear to God from the foundation of the world—when Christ died upon the cross—when he appeared before the heavenly throne as their intercessor—and they shall be dear to him when he appears to judge the world. They are his lambs, and not one of them shall be lost; they are his children, and not one of them shall perish. They are his jewels, and they shall be all made up, and fixed upon his mediatorial diadem, to shine to his glory forever and ever.

(3.) They shall be *acknowledged and acquitted by Christ before assembled myriads*. "I will confess his name," etc., Rev. 3 : 5. "They shall be mine," etc., Mal. 3 : 16.——However despised on earth they may have been, the Judge will not then be ashamed to call them brethren.

—— Many charges have been brought against them by Satan, by man, by conscience, and by the law as a broken covenant of works. But there will be no charge heard to their prejudice at the last day, nor any condemnation. They shall be pronounced and publicly declared righteous, — as righteous as if they had never sinned. —— The righteous Judge will pronounce them righteous through the perfect obedience of Christ, even unto death.

(4.) *He will admit them to an eternal heaven.* This shall be the last intended item of salvation carried into execution. God hath prepared for them a city, an inheritance, ever increasing felicity, of which it is said, "Eye hath not seen," etc. No earthly pencil can fully delineate that heaven, of which this world is but the antechamber, the brief and shadowy outline. No tortuous snake rolls under the flowers of Paradise, nor funeral mound disturbs the surface of that field — all is holiness, all is life. God made it for a people redeemed, and adapted it with elements of eternity for an everlasting joy. Hence this heaven prepared by God himself exceeds the eloquent descriptions of man or angel. Its materials we cannot explain or duly illustrate — deathless harps, golden pavement, walls of crystal, emerald, ruby, amethyst; towers and domes fused in a burning sky; like a pageant of clouds in their red repose; the image of Christ, the society of saints and elect angels, the vision of God, the well-remembered way, the seven-fold thundering Hallelujah — we are lost! —— "We shall be ever with the Lord."

5th. The coming of Christ is to be *desired and expected*. "Unto them that look for him."

Christians "love his appearing." 2 Tim. 4: 8. This implies

- (1.) A firm belief that he will come the second time.
- (2.) Faith in Christ the Mediator to constitute us "the blessed" at that period.
- (3.) Earnest desire and expectation of it. It is the coming of him who is to finish our salvation.
- (4.) Frequent application for Divine aid to prepare us.

APPROACHING MORTALITY.

"When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return."
— Job 16: 22.

THE commonness of an occurrence frequently causes it to be little thought of. The sun rises daily, and we think little of it. Every day too, man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the street; that is an occurrence little thought of. Yet it is a matter of great concern to every human being; and though the solemn subject may not be pleasant, yet it is the highest wisdom to be prepared for the event, by that method which is prescribed by the Gospel of Christ. —— While

death is gloomy and melancholy to the child of pleasure, to the man overwhelmed with business, and to the devotee of mammon, it is nevertheless sometimes regarded as a welcome messenger by the afflicted, and those who are appointed to death, and who possess a good hope through grace, ch. 19: 25.

I. THE IMPORTANT TRUTH ASSERTED BY JOB.

He refers to his own death, which, by a figure, he represents as a journey; "When a few years," etc. "The body must journey to the grave—the spirit to God the Judge of all. "Then shall the dust," Eccl. 12: 7. ——— Job expected that his death would be *immediate*, therefore the words translated "*a few years*," are improper; and that by Mr. Good is preferable,

"But the years numbered to me are come,
And I must go the way whence I shall not return."

According to the context, Job was expecting death every hour; and the text should be read in connection with verse 1 of the following chapter, "My breath," etc. He felt himself in the arms of death; he saw the grave already made for him; he believed the time of his departure was at hand. ——— Observe.

1st. *This event is full of solemn import.* ——— What is death? It is quitting the present scene of existence; it is the cessation of existence here. The lungs no longer heave; pulsation stops; the blood ceases to flow and congeals; the tongue is silent; the hand forgets its cunning; the whole structure becomes motionless, pale, and ghastly. Observe, (1.) Death is the separation of body and soul. (2.) The dissolution of every relative and social tie, however tender and endeared. (3.) It is the cessation of all human pursuits and the relinquishment of all human possessions. (4.) It is a journey that must be performed alone.

2d. *Death is a journey that must be taken by all.* "Death has passed upon all men," Rom. 5: 12. It is in the grave the rich and the poor meet together; kings as well as subjects, philosophers as well as fools. A century removes all the inhabitants of the globe to the silent grave. All that now live, in one hundred years to come, will be no more. ——— Death is unavoidable.

3d. *It is an established fact.* (1.) By the decree, "Dust thou art," etc. "It is appointed," etc. Heb. 9: 27. (2.) From the rapid advance of life. (3.) By symptoms of human frailty and tendency to decay, already apparent. (4.) By the apparent ease with which the course of human existence may be arrested.

Gracious God!

'Mid what a mass of perils do we live!
A grain may suffocate, a crumb destroy,
An atom stop the springs of life,
A breath, a cough, a sigh, may prostrate all
Our vital powers, and fit us for the worms.
So various, too, the texture of our frames,
So fine the mechanism, complex the structure,
That every motion has its risk, and all
Our hours—our very moments, are beset
With hazards, perils, fears, and ambushed ills.
What then is life? a bubble that is blown
For death to burst!!!

4th. *It is a fact characterized by the greatest uncertainty.* "Man knoweth not his time," etc., Eccl. 9: 12: "Boast not thyself of to-morrow," etc. See James 4: 13, 14. Death may invade us at a period apparently the most unlikely——when our thoughts are least turned towards it——when our circumstances may render it very inconvenient for us to depart——when we are not at all prepared for it.——It may come in the spring of life, and mar its strength and beauty, etc. "One man dieth in his full strength," etc., Job 21: 23, 24. It may come to the mart, to the hall of pleasure, to the couch of sensual indulgence.——It may come suddenly, in a moment; or it may come by protracted disease. "Be ready."

5th. *It is an event followed by vastly solemn results.* To the individual himself; it ends his probation—it is the departure of his soul into eternity—it is the apprehension of it either by demons or angels—it is the transmission of it to heaven or to perdition. See the parable of the rich man and Lazarus.——It ends the conflicts and trials of the righteous—it is the commencement of all the woes of the wicked.

Lastly. *It is a journey from which there will be no return.* "But now he is dead; can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." 2 Sam. 12: 23. In vain we linger by the corpse—the countenance will no more smile upon us. In vain we go to the grave—deaf to our cries, it will not give back its trust. Job 14: 7-12.

II. THE INFLUENCE WHICH THIS SUBJECT SHOULD PRODUCE.

1st. *It should awaken the soul to reflection.* In the midst of danger we have been sleeping—while the darts of mortality are flying around us, we are calculating on future life, etc. "It is high time to awake out of sleep."

2d. *It should rouse us to action.* It is a great journey—it is the last journey we ever shall take. Naturally we are not prepared for it. We want a disposition for it, a passport, suitable attire—provision. In fact, an interest in the atoning blood of Christ, to make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

3d. *It should induce habitual watchfulness.* Death may come as a thief in the night—be not taken by surprise when the bridegroom cometh. When the chariots of God come down, and Christ says, by death, Come up hither, be ready.

4th. *It should produce humility;* it should check vanity and pride. What has a frail dying man to boast of?

5th. *It should alarm the sinner.*

6th. *It should animate the saint.* "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." He shall soon be free from sin and suffering—soon see God and heaven, and realize the raptures of eternity.

Lastly. *It teaches the value of the Gospel.* That is the sovereign remedy for death, 2 Tim. 1: 10.

THE HAPPINESS OF BEING WITH CHRIST PREFERABLE TO CONTINUANCE ON EARTH.

"We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."—2 Cor. 5:8.

WHEN the path of the traveller is very rough and dreary, it is natural that he should ardently long for home. — So it is sometimes with the Christian pilgrim on earth. When trials abound, and their influence presses him down, he longs to reach his Father's house above, where the wicked cease from troubling, etc. — This was the case with the Apostles, whose afflictions, trials, and duties were very heavy. See preceding verses, and ch. 4:8–11; 11:23, etc. — Sometimes, too, faith and hope are in lively exercise; the Christian, like Moses, from the top of Mount Pisgah, beholds the promised land afar off, etc., and then he ardently longs to enter the purchased inheritance. — But the Apostles were governed by the will of their Saviour, v. 9.

I. THAT THE BELIEVER'S HAPPINESS IN HEAVEN CONSISTS IN BEING PRESENT WITH THE LORD.

Christ now dwells in heaven. After his resurrection, he ascended to that magnificent abode. "I ascend to my Father," etc. John 20:17; Acts 1:11; Eph. 4:8, 9. There he sitteth at the right hand of God in a state of glorious exaltation, Acts 2:33; 5:31; Phil. 2:9. — To be with the Lord implies

1st. *Fitness of association.* And what fitness is required? Holiness—purity—similarity of spirit—spiritual relish and desires for holy and heavenly exercises. Rev. 17:14–17. Christ effects this by regeneration, and the good work he has begun, he will perform and finish. Hence the Apostle says, 1 John 3:1–3; Eph. 5:25–27. — It also implies

2d. *A consciousness of his presence;* "present with the Lord." We shall be with him in that heaven—our eyes will behold him there. — Job dwelt upon this with pleasure, Job 19:25. So did David, Ps. 17:15; Rev. 22:4. "There where I am," etc., "shall sit with me on my throne," etc., Rev. 3:21. — In this world his presence is spiritual; we walk by faith, and not by sight. — How different will it be to see him as he is, and behold him face to face! — It implies

3d. *An immediate perception of his glory.* John 17:24. In heaven he is arrayed in the glories of his human nature, which will bear full proportion to the intimate union in which it stands to Deity—in the glories of his Divine nature, as the Creator and Governor of the universe—in his mediatorial glories, arising from the vastness of his undertaking, and the perfection which shall distinguish the completion of it, as described, Rev. 5:1, etc. — How wonderful, how efficacious, how rich will his love then appear! — His glory will be seen in the magnificence and immortality of his dwelling-place—in the beauty and glory of his attendants—in the salvation of his people, so rich, so com-

plete and eternal, and in the provision he has made for their enjoyment through the countless ages of eternity.

4th. *To enjoy his special favor.* Rev. 7 : 17. Then will he reveal himself to those that have loved him here—he will pour the light of immortality into their minds, so that whatever mysteries may have pervaded the works and dealings of his hand, all shall be understood and praised. 1 Cor. 13 : 2. ——— Jesus will behold his people through interminable ages, as the travail of his soul, the hopes of his cross, and the gems in his crown of glory. ——— He will make them kings and priests unto God, and bestow upon them an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. ——— His special favor to them is stated, Rev. 2 : 7, 11, 17; 3 : 5, 12, 21, etc. etc.

5th. To be present with the Lord is *to praise him*, Rev. 19 : 1, 3-6.

6th. To be present with the Lord is *to dwell with him forever*. “They shall reign forever and ever,” Rev. 22 : 5.

II. THAT CHRISTIANS ARE PRESENT WITH THE LORD IMMEDIATELY AFTER DEATH.

The very language of the text is conclusive on this head. “Absent from the body, present with the Lord.” If the body is to remain dormant in the grave till the resurrection, the Apostle would not have expressed his preference in the text. “Willing rather.” ——— The same argument is to be deduced from the language of Paul, Phil. 1 : 23, and also from the answer which Christ gave to the dying malefactor, “*To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.*” Solemn thought! To be present with the Lord implies

1st. That we must quit this vain world with all its engagements and connections.

2d. We must die — pass through all the agonies and throes of death. The tabernacle must be dissolved. ——— Could we but make our exit like Enoch and Elijah, and carry these bodies with us, to be changed into spiritual bodies in the transit, we should be content to go. But we must go the way of all flesh. ——— Yet, joyful thought,

3d. When death has made the separation — as soon as the spirit is free, it shall be present with the Lord. Angels shall take it in charge, and conduct it to him who ransomed it by his precious blood ——— and the body shall be raised and refined and reunited with the soul in God’s own time.

III. THAT TO BE PRESENT WITH CHRIST IS PREFERABLE TO CONTINUANCE IN LIFE.

The apostle expresses a desire to be absent, etc. The words import a *preference*. “We are confident,” etc. We are bold, courageous, inspired to a willingness to be absent, etc.

1st. On account of *the deficiency of human life*. Nothing here can satisfy the boundless desires of the soul. “The fashion of this world,” etc. ——— “In thy presence there is fulness of joy.”

2d. On account of *persecution*. ——— In heaven all will be love, and peace, and joy. “The wicked cease from troubling.”

3d. *The enjoyment of his presence in heaven will be uninterrupted.* No

Satan—no sin, to tempt; no evil heart of unbelief—no bodily affliction, etc. etc.

4th. *The enjoyment of his presence will be eternal.* [Refer to Part I.]

APPLICATION.

1st. This preference arises from that confident assurance which saints have of a better state, and of their interest in it.

2d. The subject affords great comfort under the loss of pious relatives and friends. They are present with the Lord. They are not lost, but gone before.

3d. Is our piety any thing like that of the apostles? Are we so weaned from the world as to be willing to be absent, etc.?

CHRISTIAN DILIGENCE ENFORCED BY SOLEMN MOTIVES.

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."—EccL 9 : 10.

It is observed by Solomon, "A prudent man foreseeth the evil," etc. Prov. 22 : 3. As man on earth is a probationer, a servant, a steward, shortly to give an account of the deeds done in the body, it is of the utmost importance to discharge the duties of life and religion aright; and in a manner that will bear the inspection of the Searcher of hearts. To accomplish this, it is highly important frequently to have eternity before us, as expressed in the text.——Is it not desirable to be found, when death comes, in a state of acceptance with God through faith in Christ, and that faith bearing fruit to the glory of God? This only can make dying tranquil and triumphant.

I. THE DUTIES NECESSARY FOR CHRISTIANS TO PERFORM: "*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do.*"

But where are we to find our duty stated? We must appeal to the law and the testimony—we must consult God's will in his word, and there he will teach us what is good.

1st. A faithful, just, and diligent *attention to secular pursuits* is enforced upon us in the Scriptures. In our respective callings we may honor and glorify God; "diligent in business," etc.

2d. We have duties also to perform of a *relative and social character*. As parents, and as children, Col. 3 : 20, 21; Eph. 6 : 1, 2;——as husbands and wives, Eph. 5 : 25; Col. 3 : 18, 19;——as masters and servants, Eph. 6 : 5, 9; Col. 3 : 22; 4 : 1; as neighbors——as citizens, 1 Pet. 2 : 13, 17.

3d. We have to secure *our personal salvation*. One thing is needful; and that is salvation. By sin we are lost—as transgressors, we are

exposed to the curse—we are polluted, and “without holiness,” etc.——But Christ is an able and willing Saviour. He is our Surety, our Wisdom, Righteousness, etc. There must be repentance, and faith in his atoning sacrifice——there must be regeneration——progressive holiness. An experience of the blessings of adoption and communion with God, and the realization of a good hope through grace. “Work out your own salvation,” etc.

4th. There are also *duties connected with church fellowship*; as brotherly love—attendance on the means of grace—prayer—the support of the ministry—co-operation with God’s people to advance the peace and prosperity of Zion—the consecration of time, substance, and talent, to the cause of the Redeemer.

5th. The Duty of *seeking the salvation of souls*, and by this, God is especially glorified. Real Christians do not wish to go to heaven alone; seeking the good of others is the very essence of religion. No man is converted for his own sake, but that he may bring others to the knowledge of the truth. When the Lord blesses his people, it is that they may become a blessing, Luke 8 : 39.——What are all the works of men, compared with the salvation of an immortal soul, and seeking the everlasting welfare of those about us!

Christians also are required to *spread the Gospel* in the world. In this work, prophets and apostles were engaged, and in it Christ himself was engaged, and for the accomplishment of which the whole system of providence is directed. The work committed to Moses and Aaron was but a faint emblem of this, and the work in which Nehemiah and Ezra were engaged was all preparatory to it. The labors of the Apostles and early Christians were all employed in laying the foundation; it is for us to raise the superstructure, and to bring forth the topstone, etc.

6th. Such a course of conduct is *to be constant*, and as a preparation for eternity. We must constantly conflict with all our spiritual foes—constantly be dead to a world which we must shortly leave—we must gird up the loins of our mind; be sober, and hope to the end. “Blessed is that servant, who, when his Lord cometh, shall be found so doing.”

☞ In the discharge of Christian duties, let us be careful to labor in that particular sphere which Providence may have assigned to us, and for which our gifts or talents may be adapted.

Again, let us never regard our works as meritorious; “for it is God that worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

II. THE MANNER IN WHICH WE SHOULD DISCHARGE OUR DUTIES:
“Do it with thy might.”——It must be done

1st. *With promptitude*. “Behold now is the accepted time,” etc. In reference to the world, souls are continually perishing—time is flying—an opportunity once lost, is lost forever—what may be practicable to-day, may not be so to-morrow.

2d. That we *perform them willingly, and from the heart*. “God loveth a cheerful giver.” 2 Cor. 8 : 3; 10 : 12.——“For the love of Christ constraineth us.”

3d. That we *perform them in the exercise of faith*. Believing that

God will accept them through Christ, and crown them with his effectual blessing.

4th. It also implies the *concentration of all our powers of mind and body*. "Do it with thy might." The might of Christian love—the might of thy faith—the might of thy prayer—the prudence of thy counsel—the usefulness of thy contributions, etc. This is to be *servant in spirit*, serving the Lord. — The most useful of God's people have been so characterized. See Moses refusing to be called the Son, etc. See Nehemiah in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. See the Apostles and martyrs. See Luther and other reformers. Nothing can be done effectually without zeal, courage, and faith.

III. THE SOLEMN MOTIVES BY WHICH THE EXHORTATION IS ENFORCED: "For there is no work," etc.

1st. *We are journeying to the grave*. Each of us may say as Joshua: "And behold this day I am going the way of all the earth," Josh. 23: 14. Whatever uncertainty there may be respecting other things, there is none respecting this. Our final resting-place is the grave; and every moment is bringing us nearer to it. We shall soon be there. "Whatsoever," etc.

2d. When we come there the duties already mentioned will either have been discharged by us, or neglected. We shall descend to that grave, believers or unbelievers—active servants of the cross, or unprofitable servants—we shall die either saints or sinners, accepted of God, or rejected.

3d. In the grave *all opportunity will be ended*. "There is no work," etc. The harvest will be past, the summer ended, whether we be saved or not. There is no device or plan of salvation there; there is no work, or duty of preaching it there, to give man a knowledge of it—there will be no opportunity again for the manifestation of wisdom or prudence in seeking the Lord while it is an accepted time, etc.

APPLICATION.

1st. Consider this subject seriously.

2d. Delay no longer. Life is the only time to escape the wrath to come.

3d. Seek Divine influence to quicken and aid you.

CHRIST THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

"I am the light of the world; he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." — JOHN 8: 12.

In these words Christ declares his character as the light of the world. He employs the most glorious and beautiful object in nature as an emblem of his perfections, and his communications of light and grace to fallen and benighted men. — He was thus predicted by the pro-

phets, and their language is most expressive of the benevolent design of his coming, Isa. 49 : 6 ; Mal. 4 : 2 ; Luke 2 : 32. — In the days of his flesh — at the time of his crucifixion — in his state of exaltation far above all worlds, he exercised, and still exercises this prerogative of enlightenment, as ascribed to him by prophets, evangelists, and apostles.

I. THE STATE OF THE WORLD REQUIRED THE MANIFESTATION OF CHRIST AS ITS LIGHT.

God is the fountain of all light and happiness. Independent of him all will be wretched and dark. — In the Scripture man is represented as *wandering, going astray and forsaking* God, and consequently as being involved in darkness. — It is the state of all men ; they have eyes, but they see not, etc. “Darkness covereth the earth,” etc. The Gentiles were then in the same condition as the Heathen nations are now — and this is the state of the greater part of the Pagan world at this day, full of idols and weapons of war, and covered over with the shadow of death. — Observe

1st. The world at that time, whether rude or polite, *knew not God*, Rom. 1 : 28. Any dumb idol was more congenial with their darkened understandings than the true God. Egypt, with all its learning, worshipped a bull, crocodiles, and onions. Greece and Rome, the seats of science and literature, acknowledged not less than 30,000 gods. — And even now, how few have proper conceptions of the character of the great Creator !

2d. The world was ignorant of the *nature of true moral government*, and of the *social virtues*. Having no distinct ideas of the Creator, apart from revelation, they recognized no responsibility to him — they indulged their passions with the greatest avidity ; they delighted in war, etc., and men became slaves to one another. God was not in all their thoughts, nor in any of their principles of moral action.

3d. They were altogether ignorant of the *method of Divine acceptance*. When conscience accused them, they were indeed miserable. They generally offered sacrifice to some deity, and used a variety of incantations, but had no certain knowledge of a future state, and no way of ascertaining their final destiny.

II. CHRIST CAME AS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

Hence, “However dark the world, I am the light of it ; he that,” etc. The Bright and Morning Star, the Sun of Righteousness. The most glorious object in the heavens is selected to show his benevolence and glory. But still it approaches not the ineffable splendors of Immanuel.

1st. *He is light in his essential character*. The sun in the firmament is the source of natural light, but Christ is the source of natural, intellectual, spiritual, and immortal light, John 1 : 4–9. He is perfect light, clear without the least shadow, or darkness of error ; pure, without any taint of evil, or possibility of corruption. Light is the tabernacle of Deity—the place of his habitation. Light is his vesture. “He clothes himself with light,” etc. “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.”

2d. He is the light of the world, *as he reveals the Divine character*. — But for him, we should have known but little of the character of God. By his sermons and teaching, and by his holy example, he

scattered the mists of ignorance, and diffused abroad the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. See John 1: 18; 17: 26; 2 Cor. 4: 6.

3d. *The light of Christ fully explains all preceding dispensations.*—— How obscure would have been the types and shadows of the law, the prophecies and providences attending the Jewish Church, had they not been followed by the doctrines of the cross.—— The disciples themselves were in the dark till Jesus opened their understandings, Luke 24: 25-27. Then they saw that Christ was the great Antitype; the substance of all the shadows, etc.

4th. *As he revealed the plan of salvation to be effected by his own sacrifice.* He stated the wretchedness, and exposure of man to everlasting death, and proclaimed himself as the great Deliverer, Luke 4: 18; John 3: 14-17.—— What a flood of light do such statements pour upon man's salvation! How vague the promulgations of human philosophy!—— Old Testament saints saw only through a glass darkly, but in the Gospel we behold it all with open face.

5th. He was the light of the world, because he also revealed the method of becoming interested in the plan of salvation. "He that believeth," etc. etc.

6th. As the light of the world, he revealed a future state. The place where the finally impenitent and unbelieving must "perish," and the "mansions" of glory which he prepares for his people. John 14: 2, 3.

Lastly, *Christ is the only true light.* There were many pretended lights in the world, as there are now, and many who followed those wandering stars; but Christ is the origin of all true intelligence, the fountain of light and life to all his people.—— Jesus not only distinguished himself from all false lights, and false prophets, but from all servants of God that preceded him, John 1: 7-9. Like the lesser planets, they borrowed all their light from him; his light is original and undervived——their light was confined to time and place; his is universal, "the light of the world;" Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, all derive their light from him.——If the light had been confined to his personal appearance, the sun would have been set when he died. But the light shone still brighter after his ascension than before, and it shall continue to shine more and more unto the perfect day.

III. THE BLESSEDNESS OF FOLLOWING CHRIST. "He that followeth me," etc. Observe

1st. *The character described.* "He that followeth me." To follow him is to forsake every false light.——It is to believe and obey, John 10: 26, 27. (To follow strange gods is to put trust in them; see 1 Kings 10: 21.) It is to imitate him, Matt. 16: 24; 1 Cor. 11: 1. It is to follow him as the Shepherd of the flock, as disciples follow their Master; as the traveller who sees the light and follows it—the pillar of fire through the wilderness.

2d. *The Deliverance.* "He shall not walk in darkness." He shall be distinguished from all sinners, 1 Thess. 5: 5. They are in the darkness of sin, unbelief, impurity; darkness implies danger, misery, uncertainty.——But from this Christians are delivered, Eph. 1: 18. How great the deliverance!

3d. *The particular Blessing.* "Shall have the light of life. How de

sirable to avoid a dark miserable life; to have life irradiated and made glad! Who loves clouds, and tempests, and darkness? "Light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun."

(1.) "Walking," supposes that life is a *journey*. We are not at home, but travelling to another world. — There are many ways that conduct to death, but only one that leads to endless life. How important to have the true light to guide us!

(2.) To have "the light of life," implies the sensible enjoyment of the Spirit's influence, which first brought us to Christ as sinners, and led to the enjoyment of salvation. "I know whom," etc.

(3.) This light of life will direct in difficulty — preserve in danger — animate the soul when despondent — discover the arts and cunning of the tempter — will reflect sin and the world in their proper aspects, as evil and exceeding bitter—it will comfort in the dark season of affliction and bereavement—it will irradiate the vale of death—and manifest to the soul a heaven in prospect! "The light of life."

THE NEW COVENANT.

"This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people." — JER. 31 : 33.

THE context contains important predictions respecting the people of God in Gospel times. Great prosperity, v. 27. They shall multiply like a field sown with corn. God will build them and plant them, v. 28.—God will renew his covenant with them. Its glorious properties and holy effects are here foretold in contradistinction from the law of Moses. God had made a covenant with Israel, of which Moses was the Mediator; but that did not secure the obedience of the people. Hence he promised a new and better covenant, v. 31, 32; Heb. 8 : 8, 9, etc.

I. EXPLAIN THE TERMS USED IN THE TEXT.

1st. The Gospel is called a *covenant*, a *new covenant*, in distinction from all preceding covenants made with Israel through the instrumentality of Moses. A covenant is a mutual agreement between two or more persons, in which something is required to be done in order to partake of some benefit. God made a covenant with Adam at his creation, the condition of which was obedience, and the reward, the Divine favor; the penalty for the breach of the command was condemnation, terminating in death temporal, spiritual, and eternal. This covenant was renewed with Israel, through Moses, when they came out of Egypt.

The text refers to the Gospel covenant, including all the blessings of present and everlasting salvation. It is called a covenant, to denote the certainty of the things promised; for covenants are confirmed by an oath. Heb. 6 : 17, 18; 8 : 6, 7.

2d. *The subjects of this covenant.* It is said to be made with the

house of Israel; that is, the Church of God, of which Israel was a type. It was for the benefit of those who should believe on his name. —

3d. *This covenant was executed by Christ*, the "Mediator of a better covenant." It was effected by his incarnation—by his perfect obedience to the law—by his enduring the penalty due to transgression. He performed all the conditions of it, and sealed it with his blood. Making a covenant with any one is a sign of peace between the parties, and this new covenant is a sign of good-will towards the house of Israel. — Affecting thought! the infinitely rich and varied blessings of this covenant were purchased at an infinite expense — "through the blood of the everlasting covenant," Heb. 12 : 20.

4th. *The period of its execution* is referred to. "After those days;" that is, after the abolition of the ceremonial law, and so rendering the former covenant void. As soon as the Redeemer came, he introduced the new covenant, and confirmed it by his death. The authority of the ceremonial law ceased immediately after this event, and both Jews and Gentiles were placed under a new dispensation. "It is finished!" Jewish altars, ye need bleed no more — all ye former types and shadows are consummated in Christ the Antitype, and the substance of all spiritual blessedness. Heb. 10 : 6-10.

II. THE BLESSINGS OF THE NEW COVENANT.

1st. *Forgiveness of sin, and complete Justification*, v. 34, "I will forgive their iniquity," etc. What an invaluable blessing is pardon of sin — that sin which separates from God — which defiles — which gives conscience its stings, etc. etc. — And from all condemnation there is perfect justification; "I will remember their sin no more." Those who believe shall be regarded and treated as innocent as if they had never sinned at all. Rom. 5 : 1 ; 8 : 33 ; Acts 13 : 38, 39.

2d. *Divine renovation*. "I will put my law in their inward parts," etc. God had before written the law on tables of stone, and that did not succeed; now he will write it on the heart.

This placing of the law in the heart, this inscribing it there, cannot be done by any human power. — It is Divine power that must effect it; "I will put." — Observe

(1.) *A new law is not here intended*, but the same as was at first impressed on the soul of man, and afterwards engraven on tables of stone. — Man was created after the likeness of God, in righteousness and true holiness, and was therefore perfectly conformed to the law in all its parts. — That law was defaced by sin, and the soul became impure and deformed, Rom. 8 : 7. — Regeneration, therefore, consists in taking away the heart of stone, and substituting the heart of flesh, and reimpresing the Divine image on the soul of man.

(2.) The expressions, "put my law," and "write it in their hearts," imply *inward knowledge* and *approbation* of it. See Isa. 51 : 7. "Thy law is within my heart." Ps. 40 : 8. Through the new creating power of the Spirit, the law becomes naturalized there. — The heart is like the ark of the covenant, in which the tables of the law were kept. — Where the law is thus written, there is a knowledge of its purity, extent, and spirituality, an approbation of what God requires, a love of and devotedness to his service. Rom. 7 : 22.

(3.) *It implies conformity to this law.* The moral law is of eternal obligation, and can never be made void. Rom. 8:31. Writing it in the heart indicates an *inward conformity* to the Divine law. And if this exist in the heart, the external conduct will also be influenced by it.

(4.) It implies not merely approbation, but *supreme love for the Divine law*, and a delight in all its requirements. The object of our affections is in our hearts, and there it is that God has fixed his law.——Before this inscription on the heart is made, there is nothing but enmity to God and his government; afterwards the soul delights to run in the way of God's commandments. The law without commands, and the law within inclines to obedience.——The obedience rendered is not merely founded on the authority of the Lawgiver; it is also excited by the excellency and goodness of the law itself.

(5.) The existence of the law in the heart *produces hatred to sin*. When temptations solicit—when sin insinuates, it causes the soul to exclaim, “How can I do this great wickedness,” etc. “The conscience is now tender, and the soul abhors that which is evil,” etc.

Such a transformation must become very *influential*. “Living epistles,” written by the hand of God, “known and read of all men.”

3. *Adoption.* “I will be their God.” Here is separation from sin and the world—alliance with God—God is the portion of his people. What a portion! Think of all his attributes, all his purposes of grace and mercy, all his promises and spiritual privileges and blessings, of his heaven, of his eternal glory. O what a portion!

“*They shall be my people*,” whom I will bless, and honor, and save, and crown. A relationship of which thousands of the rich, the honorable, and the noble, will find themselves destitute at the last day.

APPLICATION.

1st. How deep was human depravity, that required the hand of Omnipotent grace to write the Divine law in the heart.

2d. It is the nature of true religion to cherish the highest esteem for the authority of the Divine law. Antinomians treat it with indifference, and reckon they are free from it.

3d. *All our salvation is of grace.* “It is the Lord's doing,” etc. We could do nothing of ourselves to cause him to become our God, and to make us his people.

GOD'S FAVOR TO THE RIGHTEOUS.

“For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with favor wilt thou compass him as with a shield.”—Ps. 5:12.

THE Christian is a distinguished character; not indeed always in a worldly sense, but in a spiritual manner.——Amid the wickedness of men, and their exposure to the Divine wrath, he has internal evidence that he is safe in God—that he is interested in all his perfection.

and covenant arrangements; and that during his pilgrimage on earth, he will be sustained and preserved by the Divine hand. The language of the text is the language of his heart; "For thou, Lord," etc. "This God is our God forever and ever," etc.

I. THE CHARACTER HERE MENTIONED; "*the righteous.*"

This is a term by which the people of God are known, and by which they are distinguished from ungodly men. Isa. 3:10.

1st. This character is not natural to the saints. Rom. 3:10.

2d. *It is not self-created.* "Can the Ethiopian change?" etc. See also Prov. 20:9. Hence the Psalmist prayed. Ps. 51:10, because the work is not human, but Divine, Eph. 2:10.

3d. *This character is derived.* From the justifying righteousness of Christ. Rom. 1:17; 5:1. Full pardon of all sins. Perfect and free justification from all condemnation.

4th. *This character is Divinely created.* It is God that enlightens the mind, renews the spirit, etc. etc.

5th. *This character is manifest.* "Let your light." The world knows them to be such. "Others take knowledge of them," etc.

II. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS. "For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous."

1st. *He has blessed them.* Their preservation is a proof of it;—their conversion—their interest in Christ, and connection with his people, show them to be those whom the Lord has blessed.

2d. *He will bless them. With temporal good.* Their bread and their water shall be sure. See Matt. 6:24-34; Ps. 34:10.

3d. *He will bless them with Divine Influence.* John 14:16, 17; Rom. 8:16, 26.

4th. *With Communion with himself.* 1 John 1:3; John 14:23. They shall have Divine Manifestation in the public means of grace, in reading the Scriptures, in meditation, in prayer.

5th. *With the conduct of his Providence.* "Their hairs are numbered." All events, all trials are under his control. "All things work together for his good."

6th. *Special Protection.* "With favor wilt thou compass him as with a shield." A shield composed of the Divine Favor.

This implies that *they have enemies*; from wicked men—from Satan.

Also, that being weak and helpless, they will be overcome if not Divinely protected.

But the Divine Favor as a shield, will protect, defend, and save them. Gen. 15:1. With thy love and providence thou wilt keep them safe on every side. Ps. 84:11. How important to be encompassed with the shield of omnipotence, of love, of immutable grace! Observe

(1.) He will prepare them by his grace and spirit for conflict; teaching their hands to war, etc.: he will clothe them with Divine armor. Eph. 6.

(2) He will inspire them with assurance of victory. His Spirit shall bring to their remembrance the promises of God—it shall remind them that their strength is in God—that their Helper is omnipotent—that while their faith rests on God, their enemies must overcome their Divine Sovereign before they can overcome them. The hope of victory gives efficiency to the deeds of the soldier.

(3.) As their Captain and Leader he will conduct them to conquest and victory. Rom. 8 : 31 ; Ps. 27 : 5, 6. God can frustrate all the designs of such enemies ; he can and will destroy them. See Isa. 54 : 10, 14, 15, 17.

Lastly, Such protection will be *effectual*. “Compass him.” He will make a hedge about his people, Job. 1 : 10 ; he will be a wall of fire round about them. Zech. 2 : 5.

APPLICATION.

- 1st. Are you righteous ?
- 2d. Have you confidence in God, and do you feel blessed ?
- 3d. The wicked are under the Divine curse.

THE GOSPEL FOUNTAIN.

“In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.” — ZECH. 13 : 1.

THE text must be regarded as a very striking representation of Christ's efficacious sacrifice, which was the hope of the Old Testament Church, and the delightful theme of inspired prophets. Other interesting matters formed the subject of their prophecies, but none were so weighty, so interesting as this, “a fountain opened,” etc. It is a vital subject, intimately connected with the salvation of the soul. — None can truly appreciate its value, but those who are made by the Spirit to groan under the pressure of sin and uncleanness.

The prophet refers the opening of this fountain to Gospel times. “In that day.” *That* was a day, compared with which all preceding ages were but as the morning dawn. — *Then* the mists of Jewish superstition and Gentile ignorance were dispelled before the Sun of Righteousness. “That day” may refer to ch. 12 : 10. The Spirit shall cause them to mourn for sin ; but they shall not mourn without hope ; “a fountain shall be opened.”

I. CHRIST IS CALLED A FOUNTAIN.

The word “fountain” must refer to Christ, of whom it is said, “Behold the Lamb of God,” etc. John 1 : 29. This was the evangelical subject of the predictions of the prophets. 1 Pet. 1 : 10–12. — God is spoken of as a fountain. Jer. 2 : 13. So is Christ, Isa. 12 : 3. And Christ represents himself as such. John 7 : 37, 38. The Jews, after
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their return from Babylon, were accustomed in the last great day of the feast to fetch water in a joyous and triumphant manner from the pool of Siloam, in allusion to Isa. 12 : 3. Then Christ pointed them to himself as the fountain or spring of salvation. "If any man thirst," etc. — He is similarly described by the same character even in heaven. Rev. 22 : 1. He justly answers to this description, being an inexhaustible fountain of spiritual blessings. His fulness is original and boundless. "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and of his fulness have we all received," etc. — He is called a fountain

1st. *To signify plenty, abundance.* A fountain shall be opened, not a cistern, but a spring. A cistern may be very capacious, but if much frequented will be soon exhausted. In a fountain there are constant ebullitions, and supplies by secret passages. The virtues of Christ's sacrifice are not lessened by all those needy souls that have flocked to him from age to age. — Common fountains may be drawn dry, and require time to recruit; but this fountain has its rise in heaven, and is supplied so plentifully, that millions of worlds drawing at it, at the same time, for millions of ages, could not exhaust, nor in the least degree diminish it. "O the height and depth!" etc.

2d. *To denote its perpetual efficacy.* Water in a cistern may at first be sweet and wholesome, but, if kept any time, it will become putrid and offensive; and if it had originally any medicinal quality, it all evaporates. Not so the blood of Christ: like the waters of a fountain, it is ever fresh and salutary. — He hath obtained an "unchangeable priesthood" — "he ever liveth to make intercession for us." Do not you, Christians, feel his blood as efficacious, as precious, as ever?

3d. *On account of the supplies it furnishes.* "The water that I shall give him," etc. John 4. The Christian shall possess a plenitude himself; but the fulness of the Christian is limited; is derived; it is the fulness of a vessel, derived from Christ, the great Fountain. — Whatever streams of pardon, peace, and joy, flow into the sinner's heart, all have come from this Fountain. Whatever streams of happiness and foretastes of glory are drunk by the Christian, they come from the great Fountain. Whatever be the raptures realized by perfected spirits in heaven, they are derived from that pure river of bliss proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb. Rev. 22 : 1.

II. THIS FOUNTAIN WAS TO BE OPENED.

From eternity Christ was as "a fountain sealed," having in himself all fulness, before there existed any creatures whom he might supply from it. — However valuable the contents of a fountain, they would avail us nothing if that fountain was inaccessible. And what would be "the unsearchable riches of Christ to us if they were unattainable?"

1st. It was opened by *Christ's sufferings and death.* "A fountain shall be opened;" and it has been opened. "When the fulness of time," etc. During his ministry its waters flowed in partial streams. He bestowed his mercy and grace prospectively; that is, through the sacrifice he would offer for transgression. — Behold the process of opening this fountain. The Redeemer said, "Father, the hour is come!" That hour, when all the purposes of God, and all the types and prophecies respecting this Fountain, were to be completed; that hour when the wrath of God was to be poured out upon God's Beloved

Son; that hour when all the claims of Divine justice were to be fully satisfied, the law to be magnified and made honorable; that hour when the Divine mandate was to be issued, "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my Fellow; smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered," v. 7.—That hour is approaching. The bloody baptism is at hand. The cup of wrath must now be drunk. Hence, in the garden of Gethsemane, Christ realized the hour and power of darkness, and so great was the struggle that the blood flowed through every pore, Luke 22 : 44. An apostate disciple betrayed him into the hands of sinners, who dragged him to Pilate's bar, where his back was torn with scourges, John 19 : 1; Ps. 129 : 3; where he was crowned with poignant thorns, Mark 15 : 17-19. There he was buffeted, spit upon, and treated with derision, while the voices of infuriated men exclaimed, "Away with him; crucify him; crucify him!"——This fountain was *broken open on the cross*, to which he was transfixed. His hands and feet were nailed to the accursed tree, Ps. 22 : 16. And his side, pierced with a spear, emitted blood and water, John 19 : 34, an indication that his sacrifice would cleanse both from the guilt and power of sin. It was then the wrath of God, due to man, fell upon him; then he was smitten of God and afflicted, and by his stripes we are healed.

"Here," says the kind redeeming Lord,
And shows his wounded side,
"See here the spring of all your joys,
That *opened* when I died."

Thy cruel thorns, thy shameful cross,
Procures us heavenly crowns;
Our highest gain springs from thy loss,
Our healing from thy wounds.

Thus Christ, at the time of his death, properly became a fountain opened, having obtained peace for us, and "broken down the middle wall of partition," etc. Eph. 2 : 13-16. Then was the fountain opened, and the dying thief was made a monument of its cleansing efficacy.

"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

"The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day;
And there have I, as vile as he,
Washed all my sins away."

2d. *It was proclaimed by the apostles as a fountain opened.* This was in accordance with his injunction, "Go ye into all the world," etc. Mark 16 : 15, 16; Luke 24 : 46, 47. On the day of Pentecost it was exhibited as an opened fountain; many of Christ's murderers were cleansed by it; the blackest guilt was purged, the most ferocious natures changed, and multitudes of souls saved and made happy.

3d. This Fountain was appointed to *remain open till the end of time.* Christ, as the Fountain, is with his people always, even to the end of the world. The Priesthood of Christ, who officiates at this fountain, is unchangeable. As long as there exists a sinner on earth requiring cleansing, so long shall this fountain remain open. Its healing streams

shall flow to every part of the globe, Rom. 10 : 18 ; it will flow till that prophecy be fulfilled, Hab. 2 : 14.

4th. This fountain being open indicates *the willingness of Christ to receive and save perishing sinners*. It is open for that purpose night and day, and every moment the invitation is sounded forth, "Ho! every one that thirsteth," etc. Isa. 55 : 1.

5th. This fountain being open indicates *the clearness of Gospel revelation* above that of the Mosaic dispensation. Christ was a fountain for sin under the law, but like a sealed fountain he was hidden and veiled under many types, shadows, and ceremonial washings. But the stone is now removed that lay upon the mouth of the well. That which was then sealed up in types and prophecies is now laid open to the understanding of the most common capacity, Isa. 35 : 8. It requires no great strength of genius, and none of the accomplishments of human learning, to understand the way of salvation.

6th. This fountain is *very accessible, and perfectly free*. The cities of refuge of old had great facility of access ; they were situated in the most convenient places ; the road to them was always kept in repair, and the plainest directions were given. But still the manslayer might, through mental excitement and great hurry, mistake the way, and be overtaken and slain by the avenger of blood. But the way to Golgotha, who can mistake ? The desponding soul, terrified by the loud thunders of the law and conscience, and flying from the wrath to come, will find the way to the cross short and easy, and all the blessings of the Fountain without money, etc. The Gospel brazen serpent may be seen from the most obscure corner, and a crucified Jesus may be savingly looked to, even from the ends of the earth.

III. THE PERSONS FOR WHOM THIS FOUNTAIN IS OPENED. "*For the house of David,*" etc.

It is opened for all believers, who, as the spiritual seed of Christ, are of the house of David, and as living members of the Church, are inhabitants of Jerusalem. All who believe are spiritually of the same lineage as Christ was naturally, "the seed of Abraham," and of the "house of David," Gal. 3 : 6-9, and they are inhabitants of the Church called Jerusalem, Heb. 12 : 22, compare with Gal. 4 : 25, 26. Through Christ all that believe are justified, are washed from their sins in his blood, that they may be made to our God kings and priests, Rev. 1 : 5, 6.

The language may also indicate that this Fountain is opened *for all classes and degrees of men*. For men of royalty : for the kings and princes of the earth, like those of the "house of David ;" and also their subjects, even the meanest and poorest on earth, if they only come to this Fountain, and believe. All need this Fountain, whether high or low, rich or poor, learned or ignorant, etc. Col. 3 : 11 ; John 6 : 37 ; Rev. 22 : 17.

IV. THE GRACIOUS DESIGN OF OPENING THIS FOUNTAIN. "*For sin,*" etc.

Under the law of Moses provision was made for ceremonial defilement ; — the brazen sea, fifty feet in circumference, and about ten in depth, in which the priests washed their hands and feet. There were

also ten lavers in which the things offered for sacrifice were washed, from which the water was taken to sprinkle the offerers, 2 Chron. 4 : 6. There were also fountains for bodily diseases, as the pool of Siloam, John 9 : 11, and Bethesda, John 5 : 2-4. Probably a preternatural quality was imparted to them, at that period, to stimulate the mind to expectation, of the great Physician of souls.—Observe

1st. *Sin is uncleanness.* So it is described, Isa. 1 : 4-6; Ezek. 16 : 6; Rom. 1 : 24. Paul reminds the Romans that this was their state before conversion, Rom. 6 : 19; also the Corinthians, 1 Cor. 6 : 11. He describes the deeds of uncleanness, Gal. 5 : 19; Eph. 4 : 19.

2d. The seat of this uncleanness is the heart, Matt. 15 : 19. It lies too deep for any human means to eradicate. It spreads through every power, from the highest intellectual faculty to the lowest animal appetite. The conscience is defiled by it. The actions of the life, like streams from a filthy fountain, correspond with the state of the heart.

3d. It leads to condemnation, and will exclude from heaven. Hence it is a defilement the most abominable and dangerous; it disfigures the soul in the sight of God, and renders it odious in his sight, Eph. 5 : 5.

But from this uncleanness and condemnation this Fountain delivers the penitent and believing sinner, for it is opened for that purpose——for crimes the most aggravated and detested——for wretches that from the crown of the head, etc.

Christ's sacrifice delivers from guilt and condemnation.

Christ's sacrifice and the power of his Spirit deliver from the filth and power of sin. The soul is washed, the heart is renewed.

The water of life from this Fountain exhilarates and strengthens the soul to follow after holiness.

APPLICATION.

1st. How important it is to know ourselves as unclean! etc. The reason why so few are healed, is ignorance in this respect.

2d. This Fountain is the only appointed method of salvation. All self-righteousness is forever excluded.

3d. Let no penitent believing sinner despond. It was opened specially for you.

4th. Adore the rich and sovereign grace of God for providing this Fountain.

TRUST IN GOD.

"What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee."—Ps. 56 : 3.

It is very desirable to be valiant in the Christian course. There is enough in God and in his promises of grace to make us so.—Fear is frequently the result of unwatchfulness, negligence, or spiritual declension.—It must, however, be conceded that some persons have great

and formidable trials, which makes them afraid. Others possess a constitutional feebleness of mind, which frequently engenders imaginary fears which are very distressing.—Fear, if indulged, is destructive of happiness; it is a bar to progressive holiness; it gives the Adversary undue advantage, because it robs us of our strength, and produces debility and unfitness for the discharge of spiritual duties.

I. THE PARTICULAR SEASON MENTIONED: "What time I am afraid."

The life of a Christian is not uniform. He does not always feel joy; the road in which he travels is not always easy and pleasant.—The life of a Christian is as chequered as the journey of a traveller, as the voyage of a mariner, or as the warfare of a soldier. Alternate joy and sorrow, fortitude and fear, etc.

1st. The Christian is sometimes *afraid that he has no real interest in Christ*. He is so conscious of imperfection and unworthiness, that he can perceive but little evidence of his union to Christ. Afraid that his conversion might have been mere excitement. Then how poor are his services, how cold his love, how ineffective his zeal!—Such mental exercises are distressing, though even they are frequently an evidence of spiritual life; for a carnal man has no such doubts; matters of such vast importance never give him anxiety.

2d. He is sometimes afraid of *the performance of holy duties*. The minister fears the pulpit and its duties; another fears the exercise of prayer—the duty of giving faithful reproof, etc. etc., and thus the fear of man, and the fear of our incompetency, may bring a snare. Duties too great for us as creatures, should lead us to trust in God. 2 Cor. 12 : 9. Besides, God "remembers our frame," etc.; he expects from us only according to our ability and circumstances. The best services performed on earth would be rejected but for a Mediator.

3d. He is sometimes afraid that he is *not included in the covenant of grace*; not one of the elect; not a predestinated child.—Such fears are produced by thinking on what we imagine God may have purposed, rather than on what he has revealed.—But the vital question is, Do I believe in Christ? Do I love him? For all who believe in Christ, and love him, will be saved.

4th. He is sometimes made afraid by the *aboundings of error*. When Popery raises its deformed head; when Atheism and Infidelity stalk through the land; when there is a departure from pure evangelical truth, etc. etc. This is a time which demands the exercise in the text, "I will trust in thee."

5th. He is made afraid by the *conflicts* in which he is called to engage. From poverty it may be; from sickness; from persecution and the tongue of slander; from temptation; from Satanic suggestions. What trial is here! What grace is required! Human resources avail not. "I will trust in thee."

6th. He sometimes is afraid that he will *finally be disowned of God*; that his imperfections, his sins, his guilt, will finally prevent him from reaching his heavenly home. Frequently he loses sight of the fulness and freeness of Divine Grace.—This is a time to "trust in the Lord." Rom. 8 : 31, 39.

Lastly. He is afraid of *death*, that grim foe, that interrupter of all plans, schemes, business, pleasures; that destroyer of all bonds of endearment; that consigner to the dust. — Heb. 2 : 15. O fear not! trust in the mighty Conqueror, Christ.

II. THE EXERCISE NECESSARY IN THE SEASON OF FEAR: "I will trust in thee."

To trust is to depend upon God for help, deliverance from guilt, danger, and distress, for comfort and eternal life, which he has promised in his word.

1st. Trust in God implies a *knowledge of his character*. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee." Ps. 9 : 10.

2d. It implies *faith in Christ*. No one can approach God, and avail himself of his perfections, of his promises, and of his interposition, without faith in Jesus, the way to the Father. See Eph. 1 : 13, 14. Faith in Christ is constant, the habitual life of a Christian. Gal. 2 : 20. — There are times when an extraordinary exercise of faith is required.

3d. It implies the abandonment of trusting in self, or in any human power, for that which we need. "Some trust in chariots," etc.

4th. It implies an *application to God* in those particular seasons of fear, mentioned in Part I, by *faith and prayer*. See Ps. 27 : 12-14; 34 : 4-6. He has delivered, he does deliver, and will deliver. — The circumstances of the distressed one should be brought before the notice of the Father of spirits, and committed to his gracious management; all our concerns, family, trade, the Church, etc. A man should manage his secular concerns, his family affairs, his spiritual duties, according to the directions of the Scriptures, and leave the sequel to God. — He that forms no plan, nor makes any exertion, is chargeable with folly; for God blesses us through the means and measures we adopt. And he who acts, and trusts not in God, is presumptuous. Human exertion and trust in God, in reference to worldly prosperity, are intimately connected.

5th. It also implies *patience*. A disposition of mind to wait, humbly to wait the Lord's good pleasure; and reconciliation to the Divine will in disappointments and cross providences. Job 13 : 15.

Lastly. There is great encouragement to trust in God: from his *liberality*, Rom. 8 : 32; Ps. 84 : 11; from his *ability*, James 1 : 17; from his *relationship*, Ps. 103 : 13; from his *conduct in all ages*, to those who have trusted in him, Gen. 48 : 15, 16; Ps. 37 : 25.

The *happiness* of those who trust in the Lord is great, if we consider their *safety*, Ps. 125 : 1; their *courage*, Ps. 27 : 1; their *peace*, Isa. 26 : 3, 4; their character and *fruitfulness*, Ps. 1 : 3; their happy end, Ps. 37 : 37; Job. 5 : 26.

Let these beautiful Scriptures be considered, and who can forbear exclaiming, "Blessed is the man who maketh the Lord his trust!" Ps. 40 : 4.

JORDAN AND CANAAN TYPICAL OF DEATH AND HEAVEN.

"For ye shall pass over Jordan to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God giveth you, and ye shall possess it, and dwell therein." — Deut. 11 : 37.

THE design of this chapter is to stimulate the Israelites to obedience and expectancy of entering the promised land. — The journeyings of the children of Israel were typical of the Christian's journey through this desert world to a better country, that is, a heavenly one.

I. THE ANTICIPATED INHERITANCE. "The land," etc.

They had no continuing city, but wandered from place to place, and their wanderings were frequently circuitous, and beset with enemies and dangers. — Just so it is with Christian pilgrims, who have been called out of the world, from the path of error, darkness, and death, to walk in the narrow way that leadeth to life eternal. Their path, too, is often difficult; often do they pass through clouds and darkness; their state is frequently that of bodily and mental suffering, and of severe spiritual conflict. Eph. 6 : 12.

No country mentioned in Scripture is connected with such interesting associations as the land of Canaan, 5 : 10-12. — No place in God's universe is so glorious as the heavenly Canaan, for it is the residence of Deity himself.

Wherein was Canaan typical of heaven?

1st. *It was a land of promise.* It was promised as far back as Abraham. Gen. 12 : 7 ; 13 : 10-14, 15. — So heaven is promised to all true believers, as an inheritance, a better country, etc. How many declarations and promises speak of it as "the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee"! "Fear not, little flock," etc. "The gift of God is eternal life." This is the Christian's home, for which he sighs, and longs, and hopes, and to which, through grace, he is travelling. What a delightful home! "In my Father's house are many mansions."

"While through this barren wilderness wearily we roam,
How sweet to cast a look above, and think we are going home;
To know that there the trials of our pilgrimage shall cease,
And all the waves of earthly woe be hushed to heavenly peace.

Home! sweet home!

Oh! for that land of rest above! our own eternal home!

"Blest thought! in that delightful home, the parent hopes to meet
His offspring saved there to cast their crowns at Jesus' feet;
Forever free from sin and from temptation's power,
To mingle in the bliss and joys of Eden's happy bower!

Home! sweet home!

Oh! to enjoy that bliss above, the family at home!"

2d. *Canaan was a land of abundance.* "A land flowing with milk and honey," "the glory of all lands." It possessed abundance of corn, and fruits, and wine. It was a pleasant land; hence the report of the Israelites, "the land is fulness of joy," etc. Abundance of light —

of blissful employment—of agreeable association—of spiritual gratification congenial to a heaven-born soul.——Compare this with the trials of earth—from poverty, want, ignorance, etc. Rev. 7 : 15–17.

3d. *A holy land*, Zech. 2 : 12. Frequently so called and represented. There the holy purposes of God were specially developed; there his holy worship was established; there the various economies, the Mosaic and the Christian in particular, were ordained.——Heaven is called the habitation of God's holiness. God is perfectly holy; angels are holy—the spirits of the righteous are perfect; the employments are all holy. The wicked cannot enter there. Sin can never infest there. "The pure in heart see God," and none else can see him. Rev. 21 : 27; 22 : 3. Delightful anticipation! to be free from sin.

4th. *A land of rest*, Deut. 12 : 9. So it proved to the Israelites after their fatigues.——Heaven will be a rest from all toil—trials—conflicts—persecution—pain and sickness, and all the operations of human depravity. "There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest."

5th. *Permanence of residence*. This was the case with the settlement of the Israelites in Canaan as compared with their wanderings in the wilderness. But still, though settled for life, they had to quit it at death.——Heaven will be eternally permanent. "They shall go no more out." Rev. 3 : 12.

6th. *A land freely given*. "The Lord your God giveth you." What a gift was Canaan, the promised land, with all its beauties, and riches, and glory!——What a gift then is heaven! "Eye hath not seen," etc.——Remember it is given as the result of Christ's purchase on the cross!

II. THE MANNER OF POSSESSION. "For ye shall," etc.

Christians having an interest in Christ through faith in his sacrifice, now possess the Spirit as the earnest of the heavenly inheritance. It is made over to them, and they are expecting to enjoy it. See Rom. 8 : 23; Eph. 1 : 13, 14.——But as the Israelites had to *pass over Jordan* before they reached the promised land, so all believers must go through death to the heavenly inheritance. Christ, our great Forerunner, did so; and all his followers must go the same way.*——Observe

1st. The streams of Jordan *rolled between the desert and the land of Canaan*. So does the river of death flow between earth and heaven.

"Death like a narrow sea divides
That heavenly land from ours," etc.

It perpetually flowed; it constantly undermined its banks. So death is always at work—mortality will waste the strongest constitution, and overcome all precautions and preventives.

2d. *Jordan separated the Israelites from the inhabitants of Canaan*. Death separates the Church militant from the Church triumphant. On

* See the heavenly inheritance, and the river of death, graphically and beautifully described at the close of the First Part of "THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS," where "Christian" and "Hopeful" are represented as crossing the river.

this side is a parent, on the other side a child, etc. etc. Our brethren have passed the dark river, and are now with Christ, which is far better :

One family we dwell in him,
One Church above, beneath,
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death.

One army of the living God,
To his command we bow;
Part of his host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now.

3d. Jordan was *subject to the command of God*. When he gave the word, the waters rose and stood up, Josh. 3 : 16. Death too is under his control. Christ "destroyed him who had the power of death," Heb. 2 : 14, 15.

4th. Through Jordan was a *necessary way* to the land of promise. So is death, however painful and affecting. It is necessary that the river of death should be dark and formidable to render us content with the present state of existence. — But fear not, O Christian, Jesus will disperse the black cloud as thou enterest the river; he will calm and sweeten its turbid and bitter waters, and thou shalt exclaim, "O death, where is thy sting?" etc.

5th. Jordan was the *last river* they had to pass. — Death will be the last conflict — the last enemy with which the saint will have to struggle.

Observe that when the children of Israel passed over Jordan the following things were observable :

(1.) They were required to sanctify themselves previous to the passage, Josh. 3 : 5. Before death Christ must be made unto the believer "sanctification." 1 Cor. 1 : 30.

(2.) The priests were to enter the river first. So Jesus entered the river before us — as our Forerunner. The eye of faith in the dying believer beholds his foot-prints at the bottom.

(3.) The Priests stood firm in the midst of Jordan until all the people passed over, Josh. 3 : 17. Christ stands by his people in their dying moments, and they "feel the bottom of the river, for it is good."

(4.) When they had passed over, they erected memorials of praise, Josh. 4 : 5, 8, 20. So when the Christian reaches heaven he shall utter a song of praise. "We went through fire and through water, but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place," Ps. 66 : 12. "Unto him that loved us." Rev. 1 : 5, 6.

APPLICATION.

1st. The possession of the heavenly inheritance is certain: "Ye shall possess it." "Faithful is he who hath promised it, who also will do it."

2d. Meditate much on heaven and Christ, as an important means of inducing to preparation for the last conflict.

3d. All sinners will be overwhelmed in the swellings of Jordan.

PREPARATION FOR HEAVEN.

"And they that were ready went in with him into the marriage: and the door was shut."—MATT. 25 : 10.

THIS very instructive parable is supposed to refer to Christ's second advent, when he shall gather together his people who have been made "wise" unto salvation, and admit them to that heavenly and eternal banquet which his grace has provided for them, and for the enjoyment of which his Spirit shall have prepared them.* — The design of Christ in the parable is to induce watchfulness — a state of preparation for death which conducts to the judgment seat of Christ, v. 13.

I. THE HAPPINESS DESTINED FOR THE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST.

This happiness is *heaven*, with all its enjoyments, praises, and raptures. It is described in the text, "went in with him into the marriage."

1st. This entering into heaven implies *Christ's gracious approval of them*. At the last day Christ will come to his people as a Bridegroom; he will come in pomp and rich attire, and inconceivable glory, to meet them; now that the Bridegroom is taken away from us, we fast, ch. 9 : 15, but then there will be an everlasting feast. The Bridegroom then will come to fetch home his bride to be where he is, John 17 : 24, and will rejoice over his bride, Isa. 62 : 5, because she will be *ready* for his everlasting embraces of infinite love, Rev. 19 : 7, 9.

2d. His people will be *introduced by him into heaven* as the purchase of his blood, the travail of his soul, and the gems of his crown, John 14 : 1, 2.

Yes, they will dwell with him in heaven; that delightful abode of immortality—that splendid palace of the great King—that inheritance of the saints in light, the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God, with its atmosphere of perfect purity, its tree of life, its pellucid river, its streets of gold, its gates of pearl, so beautifully described, Rev. 21.

* "At a marriage, the procession of which I saw some years ago," says Mr. Ward, "the bridegroom came from a distance, and the bride lived at Serampore, to which place the bridegroom was to come by water. After waiting two or three hours, at length, near midnight, it was announced, as if in the very words of Scripture, 'Behold! the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.' All the persons employed now lighted their lamps, and ran with them in their hands to fill up their stations in the procession; some of them had lost their lights and were unprepared, but it was then too late to seek them, and the cavalcade moved forward to the house of the bride, at which place the company entered a large and splendidly-illuminated area, before the house, covered with an awning, where a great multitude of friends, dressed in their best apparel, were seated upon mats. The bridegroom was carried in the arms of a friend, and placed on a superb seat in the midst of the company, where he sat a short time, and then went into the house, the door of which was immediately shut, and guarded by Sepoys. I and others expostulated with the doorkeepers, but in vain. Never was I so struck with our Lord's beautiful parable, as at this moment: *and the door was shut.*" — BIBLE COMPANION.

There is the city whose name is light,
 With its diamond's ray, and its rubies bright;
 Where ensigns are waving, and banners unfurl,
 Over walls of brass, and gates of pearl,
 That are fixed in that sunbright clime!

Ear hath not heard, nor eye hath seen,
 Its swelling songs, or its changeless sheen;
 For the vests of light, and the harps of gold,
 And the crowns of glory wax not old,
 Nor fade in that sunbright clime!

3d. *They will be guests at the marriage feast*; "went in with him to the marriage." This implies,

(1.) The consummation of the union of Christ with his Church, of which they will not only be the observants, but the participants. In this character, the Divine Being has declared himself to his Church, Isa. 54 : 5; Hosea 2 : 19, 20; Eph. 5 : 25-27. This union will never be broken; it is an everlasting bond. See Rev. 3 : 12.

(2.) They shall dwell in his *immediate presence*, and in the most intimate fellowship and communion with him—in a state of eternal rest and joy. They shall "see him as he is." "Be with him," who bled and died for them, "which is far better." "Absent from the body, and present with Christ." They shall "behold his glory."

(3.) A marriage feast implies *high festive enjoyment*. Then choice food and wine are provided to gratify the taste, and exhilarate the spirits of the guests. But in heaven there will be no flesh and blood, and nothing animal or material adapted to their cravings. But the immortal soul will have spiritual appetites for the hidden manna, the wine of the kingdom, etc., though we cannot now understand their sublime import. See Rev. 7 : 14. He will feed them with light, with infinite discoveries, with inconceivable glories, and then will he shed his love abroad in their hearts in a measure infinitely exceeding whatever of that constraining love they ever experienced on earth. The wonders of his cross—the fruits of mediation, will be an everlasting spring of joy and rapture there.

(4.) A marriage feast implies *social enjoyment*. The guests may come from far, but they rejoice together. "They shall come from the east," etc. Angels will be there; we shall see them; we shall commune with them! Patriarchs will be there; prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, all the saved, will be there! Heb. 12 : 22, etc.

II. THE PREPARATION NECESSARY FOR THE ENJOYMENT OF HEAVEN.

"They were ready." Alluding to the wise who took oil in their vessels with their lamps, a wise precaution, that they might honor the Bridegroom at his approach. This readiness is illustrated by the wedding garment, Matt. 22 : 11.—What is the nature of spiritual preparation for death, and an interview with our Judge, etc.?

1st. *It is Divine*. Not human; not self-righteous; not external observances, not form, etc.

2d. *Spiritual enlightenment*, to discover our sinful, impure, and perishing state;—to discover the method of God's salvation through Christ; and to see its superiority to every other promulgation.

3d. *Faith in the work of Christ.* Resting the soul on that foundation laid in oaths, and promises and blood—depending upon his substitution; and, as a consequence, realizing full pardon of sin, attested by the inward witness of God's Spirit—the removal of all guilt, the annihilation of all condemnation. Isa. 12:1; Rom. 5:1, and many passages.

4th. *Inherent righteousness*, purity, etc., as effected by Divine energy; and which righteousness of the soul develops itself in *practical conformity to the will of Christ*.

5th. *Constant expectation of, and preparation* ["trimming the lamp," v. 7] *for the coming of Christ.* "They love his appearing." 2 Tim. 4:8; Tit. 2:13. The second coming of Christ is the centre in which all the lines of our religion meet, and to which the whole of the Divine life has a constant reference and tendency.

This preparation is *real and lasting*. It is both inward and outward. Not like the foolish virgins, v. 7. Mere professors have a lamp of profession in their hands, but have not in their hearts that stock of sound knowledge, holy dispositions, and settled resolutions, necessary to perseverance through the services and trials of the present state. They act under the influence of external inducements, but are void of spiritual life.—They took lamps for a present show, but not oil for after use.—The real Christian resembles the wise virgins. The work of God is begun within, and that will maintain the profession. The heart is the vessel, which God supplies, and that will make the profession consistent. Grace is the oil which he places in that vessel. It is derived from Christ the good Olive, and supplied to us, John 1:16.

III. THE SIGNIFICANT IMPORT OF THE DECLARATION: "*And the door was shut;*" as is usual when all the invited and responding guests are come. So it will be with the door of heaven:

1st. As an intimation of the *happiness and security of the wise*. They have entered; the door is shut; their happiness is begun. They are now eternally secure, Rev. 3:12. Adam was placed in Paradise, but the door was left open, and so he went out again; but in heaven the glorified saints will be *shut in*.

2d. It intimates *the doom of the wicked*; foolish ones. "The door was shut." The state of saints and sinners will then be unalterably fixed, and those that are shut out then will be shut out forever. Now the gate is strait, but it is open; but it will be shut and bolted, and a great gulf fixed. This resembles the shutting of the door of the ark when Noah was in; as he was saved in the ark, so all the rest perished.

"And the door was shut." Heaven will never be seen and enjoyed by sinners.

Their probation is ended; their seedtime is over. "If that is unjust, let him be unjust still."

All the means of grace have passed away. The dispensation of the Gospel is closed. The Gospel trumpet will be heard no more.

All instruments employed to convert and to save, will be employed

no more. God has owned them, accepted them, and conducted them through the gates into the city; and now those gates are shut.

The Spirit will strive no more.

Hope is forever past. No cries, however affecting and piercing, ~~no~~ petitions, however fervent and eloquent, no tears, though numerous ~~as~~ the drops of the ocean, and no power, though it might be a concentration of the might of all men and devils, can ever open again the ~~door~~ of heaven. It is forever shut against the wicked to keep them out, Luke 13 : 25.

Those holy gates forever bar
Pollution, sin, and shame;
None shall obtain admittance there,
But followers of the Lamb.

APPLICATION.

1st. Be thankful that means of preparation are propounded by the Gospel; "wise" persons will avail themselves of those means.

2d. Let Christians be watchful; trim their lamps; the Bridegroom is at hand.

3d. How awful to have the door shut against us! Solemn thought! It will either open for us, or close against us.

THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT.

"And one of the elders answered (*spoke*), saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."—Rev. 7 : 13-17.

THE text and the preceding verses describe in most glowing terms the happiness of heaven, and the glorification of Christians there.—— It is delightful to think that however dark and cloudy the believer's state on earth, he will shortly enter the New Jerusalem as the subject of redeeming love, and the participant of immortal joys.——Such an expectancy has in every age cheered the spirit, and reconciled it to the will of God, though that will may have allotted to the believer a chequered path on earth. Hence the estimate formed by the Apostle:—"I reckon," etc. Rom. 8 : 18, and 2 Cor. 4 : 17, 18.——How cheering must have been these visions of beatific bliss to John, exiled in Patmos! His enemies had indeed power over his body, but none over his soul. Though they had prohibited him from preaching, and banished him from his friends; and from liberty, they could not prevent the opening of heaven to him; they could not remove the ladder of communication to it; they could not hinder the sounds of angelic

melody, and the rapturous hosannahs of deathless spirits, from reaching his ear; they could not prevent converse with his Lord, nor stop those profound revelations which he made to his banished one. — This hope too cheered the martyrs amid their tragical sufferings, and made them more than conquerors.

The text has a primary reference to the martyrs who suffered under the persecutions of the Roman Pagan empire, and who are therefore described as "coming out of great tribulation." But it also applies to all believers who have "washed their robes," etc. All such are heirs of the kingdom.

I. THE CHURCH OF GOD IN ITS MILITANT STATE.

All the members of Christ's mystical body, while dwelling on earth, may be regarded as passing through *three different states*: — a sinful state — a state of grace — a state of trial: —

1st. *A sinful state.* This is the state of all before their conversion. All may adopt the language of David, Ps. 51 : 4, 5, and all must agree with the graphic descriptions of sinful man in Rom. 3 : 10, etc. — With regard to this sinful state, observe three things:

(1.) *It is a state of guilt*, which leads to condemnation. Man is a transgressor, a rebel. He has transgressed the law promulgated by the Sovereign of the universe—he has set him at defiance, and said, "Who is the Lord that I should obey him?" The law has apprehended him as a guilty sinner, Rom. 3 : 19.

(2.) *It is a state of pollution.* The heart of man is the seat of all pollution, consequently his thoughts, desires, purposes, words, and actions, correspond with the state of his defiled heart, like impure streams from a corrupt fountain. What a description of this is given by Paul! Titus 1 : 15. — Had there been no pollution, no "washing" would have been required. Those who are now in glory, on earth exclaimed, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Behold in that bloodwashed assembly the once bloody Manasseh, and Paul once a blasphemer, and a persecutor of the Church, and the Corinthians once the vilest of the vile, 1 Cor. 6 : 9-11. They are "washed" now, but once they mourned over an evil heart of unbelief, etc. — Even the services of those who believe could not be acceptable, on account of their imperfections, were it not for their being perfumed by the blood of Christ. Are our services perfect? Are our motives always pure? Are they always performed from the heart? Alas! selfish or defective motives impair all we do for men, and pollution stains all we do for God. The divers "washings" under the law were designed to establish this awful truth, and to convince the worshippers of the necessity of constant purifying.

(3.) *It is a state of danger.* Guilt always exposes to danger. — Sin is committed against an infinitely great and good God—hence it contracts an inexpressible malignity. The curse of heaven is denounced against the guilty transgressor, Gal. 3 : 13.

2d. Their state on earth was a *gracious one*. "By grace they were saved."

By the Spirit of grace they were *made sensible of their need of salvation*.

By the same Divine influence they were induced to distrust themselves. — They felt they could do nothing to remove their guilt and moral pollution. Multitudes of those glorified ones had been washed in the Mosaic laver in Jerusalem, and baptized in the waters of Jordan; others who "came out of great tribulation," had been bathed in blood and baptized in suffering; yet to none of these things is efficacy ascribed. Neither labors, nor sacrifices, nor alms, nor prayers, nor tears, nor martyrdom, can take away sin.

By the word of grace, they were directed to Christ as the only Saviour, and they believed on him with their heart unto righteousness. The Sacrifice of Christ is the only means of absolution from guilt, and the only medium of sanctification. They "washed" their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Having been "washed in his blood," supposes that they had believing intercourse with the Saviour—that they came to God through him—that in all their prayers for pardoning mercy and cleansing grace, their reliance was wholly on his atoning blood. — As a consequence of this faith in Christ, they were fully absolved from sin, and perfectly delivered from condemnation, Rom. 8 : 1, and put into the possession of peace and joy, Rom. 5 : 1, etc. — Just as when the children of Israel were to be delivered from Egyptian bondage; on that memorable night when the destroying angel was to pass through the land to destroy the first-born in every house, the blood of the Passover Lamb was not only to be shed, but sprinkled on the lintels and door-posts of the houses of the Israelites; so must the precious blood of Christ fall upon the souls of lost men, that they may be saved.

It was thus that the glorified saints in heaven, "washed," etc., and "THEREFORE," they are now before the throne of God. They received Christ as their Mediator; they received his Spirit as their teacher, their sanctifier, etc. They complied with the terms of the Gospel, and therefore were accepted, and ultimately glorified.

3d. A state of trial. "Came out of great tribulation."

Tribulation arising from *persecution*, leading to contempt, slander, confiscation of property, banishment, imprisonment, and martyrdom. Hence the description by the Apostle of tribulation in the prophetic ages, Heb. 11 : 35–37. And this was especially the case in the Apostolic and subsequent ages, when the direst persecutions were inflicted by the Roman Pagan Emperors. How tragic are the pages of history in reference to this species of tribulation! Look at the martyrdoms effected by a despotic monarch and despotic priests in the time of Queen Mary. Read the history of subsequent periods for the sufferings of the Puritans and Nonconformists of England, the Covenanters of Scotland, and the Waldenses, etc., on the Continent of Europe. Millions on millions have suffered and bled on account of their profession of the truth, and multitudes have passed from dungeons, and scaffolds, and fires, dire scenes of tribulation, to the haven of peace above, where the wicked cease, etc. This glorious company of martyrs is described by John, Rev. 6 : 9–11.

Tribulation arising from *poverty*—from *afflictions* painful and protracted—from *bereavements* severe and cutting—from spiritual conflicts most distressing. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." All who

maintain and exemplify Christian principles and character will find their state on earth to be one of trial.

Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize,
And sailed through bloody seas?

Sure I must fight if I would reign;
Increase my courage, Lord!
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain,
Supported by thy word.

II. THE CHURCH OF GOD IN ITS TRIUMPHANT STATE.

John saw the ransomed Church in heaven. This implies that they had continued their profession till death ——— and that God had completed the work of grace in them, and glorified them. What is their state in heaven?

1st. It is that of *unspotted purity*. Said to be “arrayed in *white robes*, and have washed their robes, and made them white,” etc. Such terms are used in Scripture to denote purity and the favor of God, Ps. 51 : 7; Isa. 1 : 18. White linen is said to be the righteousness of the saints, Rev. 19 : 8, and this is the righteousness in which they stand before the throne; it is a righteousness wrought for them and in them by the merits of a Redeemer’s blood, and the power of his Spirit. Their purity is now perfect, being presented “*faultless*.” Jude 24; Eph. 5 : 26, 29. ——— No more does Job exclaim, “Behold, I am vile,” etc.; nor David, Ps. 51 : 4, 5; nor Isaiah, 6 : 5; nor Paul, Rom. 7 : 23, 24. All sinful thoughts and wishes are forever annihilated. They love God; they delight in holiness; they are like God, and they see him as he is. Not one particle of depravity remains; the last fibre of corruption has been destroyed; they are as pure as angelic spirits, now their companions, and Christ, whose pure and searching eye is as a flame of fire, beholds in them neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing. Admiring the comeliness of the ransomed throng, as the production of his grace, he exclaims, “Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee.”

Sin (my worst enemy before),
Shall vex my eyes and ears no more;
My inward foes shall all be slain,
Nor Satan break my peace again.

2d. *Of triumphant joy*. They appear there with triumphant honor, as those who have overcome, and are now wearing the robes of victory. See 2 Tim. 4 : 8. White robes were always allotted to conquerors, to which Christ himself refers when addressing the Churches, Rev. 3 : 4, 5, 18; 4 : 4; 7 : 9, 13, 14. Over Sin, Satan, and the world, they have been made more than conquerors, etc. They have therefore received the fulfilment of those precious promises. “To him that overcometh,” etc. They “eat of the tree of life,” and of “the hidden manna.” Each has received the “white stone,” and the “new name.” They have received the “palm” of victory, and the “crown of life,” and have been made “pillars in the temple of God, and shall no more go out.” ——— No power can tempt their holy souls again. They are forever free from sinful allurements, worldly fascinations, and Satanic influence. Their enemies they will see no more forever.

Psalms of glory, raiment bright,
Crowns that never fade away,
Gird and deck the saints in light,—
Priests, and kings, and conquerors they.

Yet the conquerors bring their palms
To the Lamb amidst the throne;
And proclaim in joyful psalms,
Victory through his cross alone!

Round the altar, priests confess—
If these robes are white as snow,
'Twas the Saviour's righteousness,
And his blood that made them so.

3d. *Residence in the presence of Deity.* They "are before the throne," a term expressive of the peculiar favor with which they are received by the King of glory. The glory of this throne is described, Ezek. 1 : 26-28, *which see*, and Dan. 7 : 9; Isa. 6 : 2. Is it accounted honorable to approach an earthly throne? or to stand before an earthly monarch? Oh! what must be the honor to stand before that majestic throne of the King of kings, and Lord of lords! The ransomed spirits in bliss are not paying a mere passing visit to the royal court; they have entered the king's palace as their abiding place;—for what is their posture? "they stand before the throne," full of wonder, delight, and adoration.

4th. *Of agreeable, unceasing, and unwearying service;* "they shall serve him," etc. The Levitical priests were consecrated to their office by being first washed and purified in the sacred laver, Ex. 40 : 12, 13, and in allusion to this it is said that his sanctified ones are made priests in his holy temple above, where they serve him without intermission or repose, Rev. 1 : 5, 6; 22 : 3; Ps. 134 : 1. — They serve him by acts of grateful praise, v. 9, 10, and v. 11, where saints and angels adore together, making but one congregation, "an innumerable company of angels, and the general assembly and Church of the first-born." — They serve him as he may appoint in *heavenly* service. — They serve in his *immediate* presence, not as below. They serve him fervently—without weakness—without interruption—without defect or sin—without weariness; "day and night in his temple;" for immortal souls are fitted for immortal service.

5th. *Communion with Christ.* Often did he promise that his disciples should be "with him" in heaven; and so it shall come to pass; for "he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them," v. 15, ch. 21 : 3. They shall behold him in all his glory; they shall hear him speak infinite things with infinite heavenly eloquence; they shall feel him as his love warms and enraptures their expanded hearts; they shall speak to him in the language of reverend praise, and humble inquiry; they shall follow him wherever he leads the way to the tree of life, or the pure river of the water of life, or to the remotest parts of his empire; they shall constantly receive from him new intelligence, new proofs of his wisdom, his power, and his love. If the presence of Christ was so delightful in the house of God, when his mediation has been described, or symbolically represented by bread and wine, or when fervent prayer has been offered in his name, what will be the realization of feeling, and rapturous joy, when he "shall dwell among them."

6th. *Perfect and eternal exemption from all distress.* It must be so, if they serve him without interruption, and if he dwell among them. Hence

v. 16. "They shall hunger, etc." "God shall wipe," etc., v. 17. Poverty has often been the lot of the pious on earth; they have "hungered and thirsted;" they have toiled and been weary; have been destitute, tormented, and afflicted; but this shall be known no more.——"Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." Like Jacob, who said that while shepherding the flock of Laban, "in the day the drought consumed him, and the frost by night," so these pilgrims had often been weary and faint in their course, and subject to many hardships. But in heaven they will be forever delivered from these calamities——neither the *fire of persecution*, nor the *frost of adversity*, shall annoy them any more.

"God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Numerous are the sources of sorrow, but God will dry them all up. They wear no funeral attire, no sackcloth there; for God shall wipe away all tears, and the days of their mourning will be ended. There will be no prodigal, no penitent, no mourning Christian to drop tears there; "for all sorrow and sighing shall flee away." There is no night there of sin, of ignorance, of affliction, of death. All is daylight there, created by God and the Lamb, who are the light of the holy city. Jeremiah will utter no plaintive language there. Transgressors will grieve the holy no more. Bartemeus is the poor blind beggar no more. Lazarus's sores have been succeeded by immortal beauty, and in Abraham's bosom he will weep no more. The weeping widow is no longer crushed to the dust by the heavy hand of poverty. The orphan child is no longer forsaken and homeless. There is nothing in that happy residence to distress or annoy. Pinching poverty and wasting disease are unknown. The distressing complaint will never accost the ear, "I am sick." The sting of death and the terrors of the grave will never present themselves there. There are no mausoleums in the land of eternal life. There is no death of friends there. Martha and Mary go to no beloved brother's grave to weep. No deceitful heart, no secret foe, no fascinating world, no artful Satan, yonder. The former things have passed away, and the dispensation of immortality has succeeded. The white-robed multitude, the congregated hosts of God's elect, sing a new song—a song which none can sing but the redeemed from among men.——Such bliss is enough to make the Christian say,

"I want to put on my attire,
Washed white in the blood of the Lamb;
I want to be one of your choir,
And tune my sweet harp to his name;
I want—O I want to be there,
Where sorrow and sin bid adieu,
Your joy and your friendship to share,
To wonder and worship with you."

Lastly. A participation in all that bliss which God has promised to communicate, v. 17. "For the Lamb which is in the midst," etc. He shall communicate to them everything calculated to secure, continue, and increase their happiness.——"Shall lead them unto living fountains of waters," which shall never be exhausted. A spring in the Hebrew phraseology is termed *living water*, because constantly bubbling up, and running on. These "living fountains" indicate endless sources of happiness, which Christ will supply to his people from his own infinite plenitude. These eternal fountains will make an infinite

variety in the enjoyments of the blessed. There will be no sameness, and therefore no weariness to the spirit; every moment will open a new source of pleasure, instruction and improvement; they shall make no eternal progression into the fulness of God. And as God is infinite, so his attributes are infinite, and throughout infinity more and more of those attributes will be discovered; and the discovery of each will be a *new fountain* of enjoyment. These sources must be *opening* through all eternity, and yet, through all eternity, there will still remain, in the absolute perfections of the Godhead, an infinity of them still to be opened.

THE ROSE OF SHARON.

A METAPHORICAL SKETCH.

"I am the Rose of Sharon."—Song 2:1.

SHARON was a very fruitful place, where David's cattle were fed, 1 Chron. 27:29, and was situated south of Mount Carmel, along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, extending to Cesarea and Joppa. As it was a region of great fertility, it became proverbial of any place of beauty and fertility, see Isa. 35:12. It is also called a place of flocks, Isa. 65:10. The Damascus rose and the Sharon rose are the finest kinds, and are at this day greatly admired in the East for their beauty and fragrance.

The figurative representations of the Saviour's character and work are frequent subjects of meditation to Christians, and convey the truths of the Gospel with much sweetness and power to the heart. Christ is here to be considered as the Rose of Sharon.

I. A Rose is the offspring and fruit of a good, though apparently dry root.

Christ, as it regards his human nature, is the Offspring of David, or a Branch out of the Stem and Root of Jesse, Rev. 22:16; Isa. 11:1. In regard to his Divine Nature, he came forth from his Father; he dwelt "in the bosom of the Father," but was sent into this world to secure man's salvation.

II. A Rose is a beautiful flower, very pleasant to the eye, of different colors, red and white, and in some those two colors are intermixed, which intermixture renders them very beautiful.

The beauty with which the God of nature has adorned many of the productions of the earth is wonderful. It is not merely on a slight inspection that they charm, but the more minute the examination is, and the more enlightened and correct the taste, the admiration which they excite is always heightened. "Consider the lilies," etc., Matt. 6:28, 29.

Jesus possesses all Divine and moral excellencies; "he is altogether lovely." The loveliest production of nature is only a faint emblem of him in whom the greatness which excites admiration is united with

the tenderness which wins our love. He alone is the image of the invisible God, fairer than the children of men, more bright in excellence than angels, and forever unrivalled in all that charms the heart. Hear how the Apostle describes him, Rev. 1 : 18, etc.—Christ is said to be *white and ruddy*; the former is expressive of his Divinity, the latter of his humanity. The one denotes his natural purity and innocency; the other his bloody agony and sufferings for our sake; hence said to be red in his apparel, Isa. 63 : 2. How interesting is Christ in the atonement which he made, the blessings he purchased, and the victory which he achieved!

Yes, my Beloved to my sight
Shows a sweet mixture, red and white;
All human beauties, all Divine,
In my Beloved meet and shine,

White is his soul, from blemish free,
Red with the blood he shed for me;
The fairest of ten thousand fairs,
A sun among ten thousand stars.

III. A Rose is celebrated for its fragrance. So condescending is the providence of God, and so rich is his goodness, that he ministers delight to all our senses, and hath given to various plants delightful odors. We read of the smell of Lebanon, and in the East such is the profusion of odoriferous plants in some places, that the air is scented by them for a great space around.

The Lame of Christ is as "precious ointment poured forth." He is the "savor of life unto life to them that believe." What is so sweet and refreshing to the spiritual senses of the soul, as the sacrifice and saving power of Christ? Every virtue of Christ's character, and every promise of his word; every precept of his law, and every rite of his worship; every act of his mediation, and every blessing of his grace, is, to the good, like "ointment poured forth." His lips are like lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh; all his garments smell of "myrrh, aloes, and cassia;" and his death was "a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savor unto God." It hath made the loathsome dungeon pleasant, and overcome the noisomeness of the grave. When Jacob appeared before his father in the goodly raiment of Esau, Isaac blessed him, and said, "The smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed." And Christians appear before God, clad in the righteousness and animated by the Spirit of his Son, and for his sake God accepts them.

IV. The Rose possesses medicinal virtues, which are very serviceable in some complaints. Being conserved, and otherwise used and applied, they exhilarate the spirits, are very cooling, and good for the eyes.

But no plant can be likened in virtue to Christ, the Rose of Sharon, and the Balm of Gilead; for it affords a remedy for all plagues of the heart. Raging corruption is quelled by its influence, and the anguish of a guilty conscience is healed. Being crucified for our sakes, what precious virtue, what soul-mollifying water of life he yields to men; making the man of anger gentle, meek, and humble; the mourner in Zion cheerful and happy; and giving light to the understanding. The

Rose of Sharon is like the tree which Moses was commanded to cast into the waters of Marah, which rendered them wholesome and sweet. It makes the severest affliction light, and death, which the carnal man dreads as his curse, to be welcomed with gratitude.

Papal superstition has attributed many wonderful virtues to the fancied relics of the cross; but the efficacy of the Rose of Sharon, in curing the moral diseases of the heart, is incontrovertible, and one touch of it by the hand of faith, will bring from it a remedy to heal all the maladies of the soul.

V. The Rose is reckoned by ancient and modern naturalists to be the Queen of Flowers.

The superexcellency of Christ is represented by the Apostle, Col. 1 : 15-18. He infinitely excels men and angels; therefore none are to be compared with him. He is "the Head, the Flower, and Glory of things in heaven, and of things on earth, whether Thrones, or Dominions," etc. He is fairer than the children of men, the chiefest among ten thousand.

As the Rose of Sharon was singular in beauty and property; so Christ is singular in the unity of the two natures in his person; singular in his incarnation, in his humiliation, in his conquest and exaltation, etc.

VI. The Rose of Sharon signifies in the Greek, the Flower of the Field. Sharon was a place or plain where herds and cattle were fed, 1 Chron. 27 : 29. Roses that grow in a field or plain are not planted by man. They are also liable to be plucked, trodden down, or devoured by beasts.

Jesus Christ was not planted by man, but by the hand of the Father. Christianity is Divine.——When Christ was brought forth to the field of this world, he was exposed to the malice of savage men, who, like beasts of prey, labored to tread him down, as in the case of Herod, Judas, and the Jews. How was he plucked to pieces, and trodden under their feet!

Barbarous people! cruel priests!
How they stood round like savage beasts;
Like lions gaping to devour,
When God had left him in their power.

They wound his head, his hands, his feet,
Till streams of blood each other meet;
By lot his garments they divide,
And mock the pangs in which he died.

VII. The Roses of Sharon were free. Growing in the field or plain, any person might have access to them. They were as free as the air we breathe.

Jesus is free for all sinners; whoever will come may come, and take the good and gracious virtue, and all the soul-refreshing blessings that dwell in him, Isa. 55 : 1; Rev. 22 : 17.

VIII. The Roses of Sharon gave beauty and glory to the field or plain, and caused the scene to be lovely and enchanting.

The Son of God is the beauty and glory of believers, his mediatorial work having been executed for perishing sinners, God accepts them

when they believe on that account, and regards them as righteous. Hence they can triumph, Isa. 12 : 1.

"Thou art all fair, my bride, to me,
I will behold no spot in thee."
What mighty wonders love performs,
And puts a comeliness on worms!

Defiled and loathsome as we are,
He makes us white, and calls us fair;
Adorns us with that heavenly dress,
His graces, and his righteousness.

Lastly. Sharon was a place of pasture, a place of feeding, and where the flocks used to rest, a very fruitful valley.

Christ is to be found in green pastures, in his church, where his word is faithfully preached, and the ordinances are duly administered. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." Ps. 23 : 2. A preached Christ gives rest of mind to the penitent sinner, and to the desponding Christian. The pastures in which Christ feeds his people are his word and ordinances. It is there they receive out of his fulness, and grace for grace. He himself is the food of his people; they eat his flesh and drink his blood—his sacrifice is that to the mind which food is to the body; it gives nourishment, strength, and satisfaction to the soul that receives it.

APPLICATION.

1st. The most striking figures are but representatives of the Redeemer's excellencies. The rose, for instance, is not a winter flower; it blooms only in summer; but Christ ever liveth, full of grace, power, and glory. The rose too is but a fading flower. But Christ is the same, yesterday, etc. To Jesus belongs the power of an endless life. The rough blast of persecution hath blown upon this Rose of Sharon, yet it remains unhurt. Christianity hath seen mighty empires sink in ruin, and generation after generation going down to the dust, yet its life and its virtues are unimpaired. It has Omnipotence for its defence, and eternity for its duration.

2d. How wise and happy are those who possess and delight in this flower! How foolish are sinners! They see no beauty, and perceive no fragrance in Christ. Their spiritual senses are gone. They prize the thorns and briers, the pricking pleasures and business of the world, above the rose, the lovely Rose of Sharon.

3d. Value this Divine flower more and more. Account him, as indeed he is, the rose and diadem of your souls; bear him not only by an outward profession on your breasts, but admit the sweet-smelling savor of his grace into your hearts.

CHRISTIANS LIKE THE SUN.

"So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might."—JUDGES 5 : 31.

THIS language concludes the song of triumph sung by Deborah and Barak. It celebrates the triumph of Israel over Jabin, a Canaanitish king, whose hosts were conducted to the field of battle against the

Israelites by Sisera.——The text is to be considered as a prophecy rather than as an imprecation. "All thine enemies shall perish," etc. See Psalm 92 : 9.

I. THE CHARACTER OF GOD'S PEOPLE : "*they love him.*"

This is the character of all God's people. They acknowledge him as their Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer. They consider his goodness in these respects, and they love him.

1st. This love has been implanted in their hearts by the Holy Spirit. Formerly they hated him and his service.

2d. *Their love is sincere.* It must be so if the Spirit has created it in the heart, Eph. 6 : 24. The love of many, however, is merely professional.

3d. *This love is supreme.* "Whom have I in heaven but thee," etc.

4th. *This love is practical.* It dwells in the heart, and shows itself in the life ——It shows itself by loving God's people—by promoting the welfare of Zion—by seeking the salvation of the world, Rom. 10 : 1.

5th. *It is self-denying.* It makes sacrifices—it encounters difficulties—it has braved sufferings and death, 2 Cor. 5 : 14, 15.

II. THE SIMILITUDE BY WHICH THE CHARACTER OF GOD'S PEOPLE IS ILLUSTRATED.

The saints are called "lights of the world," and John the Baptist was called "a burning and shining light." In the text the comparison is to the Sun.——Observe

1st. The Sun receives its light from *the creative energy of God.* Ps. 136 : 8. So Christians have derived their light from God himself. See 2 Cor. 4 : 6. They have been taught by God's Spirit, which has taken of the things that are Christ's, and revealed them to their minds. They have been enlightened to see their guilty and ruined condition, the method of acceptance through Christ, his suitability as a Saviour. Thus Paul addresses Christians, 1 Thess. 5 : 5.

2d. Christians resemble the sun in *beauty.* Nothing can be more beautiful than light. Beautiful in itself, and that which unfolds the beauty of all other objects. "Truly light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." So Christians are beautiful in their individual spiritual character—in their associated character, knit together by the bond of holy love. Holiness is that which adorns the soul—the life. Compare the character of Paul the Apostle with the character of Saul of Tarsus.

3d. The sun is a *visible object* ; it excites attention, and inspires admiration. The course of Christians is not hidden—but manifest : they are lights of the world, cities set on a hill, living epistles. "Let your light," etc. Matt. 5 : 16. Though Christians should do nothing through vain glory, yet their conduct should be of such a character as to command attention.

4th. The Christian resembles the sun in *usefulness.* What a dark world this would be if the natural sun were to cease its shining ! What would the world be without Christianity ?

(1.) As the rising sun dispels *clouds and darkness*, so the believer rises above the changes and calamities of life—he dispels the mists and darkness of prejudice—proves that religion does not tend to licentiousness—that it is not a system of melancholy.

(2.) Like the sun, the Christian spreads the most *salutary and delightful effects* around. The sun is the great spirit of the world, in the light of which all things are made to rejoice; perpetual spring attends his course; all things revive at his approach, and assume a new face of youth and beauty; winter, with its frosts and desolating blasts, flees away. But let the sun depart, and nature will sicken and become deformed.——So the life of the Christian—and the benevolent efforts of the Church, in conjunction with Divine power, are calculated to make the desert blossom as the rose, etc. Isa. 35 : 1, 2. The people of God labor to save souls from death—they are the salt of the earth—the conservators of the world—the pillars of creation, by their prayers, influence, etc.——As the sun is always communicating light to other bodies, so Christians “to do good and to communicate, they forget not, for with,” etc.

(3.) The influence of the sun is *very extensive*, reaching to every creature.——The charity of Christians would save the whole world.

5th. The light of the sun is *irresistible*. Who can say to it, “Hitherto shalt thou come,” etc. No one can stop the work of the Church, for it is God’s work, Isa. 55 : 11.——The light of the Gospel dazzles and confounds the enemies of Christ. Job 24 : 13; John 8 : 18.

6th. Christians, like the sun, *shine more and more unto the perfect day*. They grow in grace, in knowledge, purity, peace, joy, till their course terminates in the meridian noontide splendor of heaven.

• INVITATION TO BACKSLIDERS.

“O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord,” etc.—HOSEA 14 : 1-4.

THESE words were delivered to Israel in captivity, suffering much, and having still much more to suffer, if they did not repent. The text is an invitation for them to return with penitential sorrow and confession to God, from whom they had revolted. A delightful assurance is given that they should find mercy.——The Gospel of Christ is a message of salvation to all sinners.

I. THAT ALL MEN ARE IN A FALLEN STATE: “Thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.”

Man was created in the Divine image, and made a participant of the Divine favor. But sin has destroyed that likeness, and separated him from God. The image of Satan is now upon him—the spirit of the world is now within him—he is a rebel—an outcast—an alien. This fact is established

1st. *By Scripture*, where man is stated to be a transgressor——full of impurity——in a state of condemnation. “All have sinned,” etc. “All gone astray.” This is a state of dishonor, of misery, of imminent peril.

2d. It is confirmed *by experience*. All penitents feel that they are fallen—and the sinner, sometimes disgusted by his own deeds, is compelled to admit it. Ps. 51 : 1-5.

3d. It is confirmed *by observation*. The fallen state of man is seen everywhere; it shows itself in the profane language and dark deeds of the human family. Look around and see.

II. GOD INVITES FALLEN MEN TO RETURN: “Return unto the Lord thy God.”

Behold the compassion of God! He might have said, “Depart.”——This implies

1st. *A sense of danger*;—that if the sinner does not return he must perish. A conviction that he is fallen—impure—guilty—and cannot save himself.

2d. *An approach to God* the only fountain of mercy. “Let the wicked forsake his way,” etc. The sinner stops; he goes no farther in the broad way, but like the Prodigal, returns to his Father’s house.

3d. A return to God *in the way he has appointed*. Through Christ. “No man can come unto the Father except by me.”

III. THE MODE OF ADDRESS IS PRESCRIBED.

1st. “Take with you words,” expressive of a wounded conscience—a contrite heart. Like the Prodigal, feeling yourselves to be sinners, and saying, “God be merciful to me a sinner.”——God will allow the sinner to address him. “Draw nigh unto me,” etc. “Him that cometh unto me,” etc. “Come, and let us reason together,” etc.

2d. *Prayer for pardoning mercy*. “Take away all iniquity.” He can take it away through the blood of his Son. Take it away as a burden too heavy for me to bear. Give me a free and full remission. “As far as the east.” “Blot out my sins as a thick cloud.”

3d. *Prayer for gracious acceptance*. “Receive us graciously.” Let me be freely and fully justified. When I come before thee, look upon me through the face of thine anointed. I believe in Christ; treat me, for his sake, as though I had never sinned. “Receive me graciously.”

4th. *The abandonment of all other objects of trust*. “Asshur shall not save us,” etc. We will not trust in that powerful king any more; we will not look either to riches or power for true rest or peace of mind. We will not look to our own righteousness, which is as filthy rags, or to any other human source for salvation. They cannot save us. “There is none other name,” etc. “Other foundations,” etc.——“We will not ride upon horses.” Literally, we will not fix our hope for deliverance on the proud Egyptian cavalry. Isa. 30 : 2, 16; 31 : 1. Spiritually, we will renounce all human expedients and devices for our salvation. See Jer. 3 : 3.

5th. *The abandonment of all idols*. “Neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods,” v. 3. Idolatry was the

cause of Israel's punishment.——Does not the sinner worship idols—the creature—wealth, honor, pleasure, sensual indulgence?——All these must be abandoned before he returns to God, and Christ to him must be supreme, Luke 14 : 26, 27, 33.

IV. THE ENCOURAGEMENT FOR A SINNER TO RETURN TO THE LORD. It arises from

1st. *The paternal mercy of God*; “for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.” See this exhibited in the return of the Prodigal, Luke 15 : 20–24. The sinner is helpless, desolate, a perishing orphan, till translated into God's family. He “will receive the returning sinner.” See 2 Cor. 6 : 17, 18.

2d. From his own comprehensive and gracious promise: “I will heal,” etc., v. 4.

He will act the part of an infinite Physician. Ye have backslidden and fallen, and are grievously and mortally wounded by that fall, but I, who am the Author of life, and who can redeem from death, will *heal* all those wounds and spiritual diseases.

I will love them freely, after a liberal princely manner. Though they are vile and worthless, I will not reject them, but save them, and incessantly do them good. It shall not be a love of affection merely, but a beneficial love. A love that not only feels delight in itself, but fills them with delight who are its objects, by making them unutterably and supremely happy.

V. THE RETURN OF PRAISE TO BE MADE BY THE SAVED SINNER: “So will we render,” etc.

The *fruits* of our lips; the sacrifice of praise, and the hearty *obedience* which our *lips* have often promised. We will spend and be spent for thee.

THE SERVICE OF CHRIST AND ITS REWARD.

“If any man serve me, him will my Father honor.”—JOHN 12 : 26.

THE followers of the Redeemer are ever to be distinguished by love to his name, and sincere and active exertions to promote his glory. A mere profession of his cause will avail nothing. Many say, “Lord, Lord, but do not the things which he has said.”——A person may have an extensive knowledge of his Gospel, its doctrine, and its precepts, and yet have no true Christian love. He may possess a benevolent heart, and weep over the distresses of his fellows, and contribute to their necessities, yet if he possess not the charity, or love of the Gospel, it profiteth him nothing. Natural benevolence, implanted in the heart by the Creator, is very different from that mighty principle of love created in the soul by the Spirit of the Creator. Hence the Apostle beautifully observes, 1 Cor. 13 : 2, 3.——The text and the preceding verses describe the service of Christ and its reward. That service

yields honor even in this world, but the principal manifestation and realization of it are reserved for eternity.

I. THE NATURE OF CHRIST'S SERVICE.

It is an act of infinite condescension on the part of God to allow sinful dust and ashes to serve him. But multitudes have been admitted into his service whom he has honored with the appellation of "servants." "My servants;" "the servants of God."—— Observe,

1st. That man as a sinner is *estranged from the service of God*. He serves sin; Rom. 6 : 16, 17, 20. See also Titus 3 : 3.——The sinner is naturally disinclined to the service of God. Their character is accurately described by Job 21 : 14, 15.

2d. All who engage in the service of Christ become previously the *subjects of Divine renovation*. A renovation which induces correct views of Christ as the Master or King in Zion; a renovation which causes the sinner to see the infinite superiority of Christ's service to that of sin; a renovation that causes detestation of sinful service, and that begets love to the service of the Redeemer. Hence Paul speaks of "serving in the newness of the Spirit." Rom. 7 : 6. Without such a change there can be no acceptable service rendered to God.

3d. *Renunciation of the service of sin and a profession of Christ*. See 1 Thess. 1 : 9; Heb. 9 : 14; 2 Cor. 6 : 17. Hence there is *repentance* — there is *faith* in the sacrifice of Christ for acceptance with God — and union with his people to co-operate with them in serving the Lord Christ.

4th. This service must be *regulated by the Master's will*. Hence Christ says, "If any man serve me, let him *follow me*," v. 26. Let him believe my Gospel—cherish its holy doctrines, and obey its important precepts. Let him not follow his own understanding, or mere worldly wisdom, but my directions, my methods, my prescriptions, my example. Let him go where I lead him, and in the manner I lead him.——The service devolving upon us Christ has prescribed. Nothing is left to our own fancy or discretion. He knew our utter incompetence to find out God, or what would be acceptable in his sight, 2 Cor. 3 : 5. He has therefore prescribed our duty in his word, and it is our wisdom and privilege to observe all things whatsoever he has commanded us. While he says, "Follow me," let us say, "Lo I come to do *thy will*, O my God."——Beware of following your own will in preference. "Add not to his words lest he reprove thee."—Be not wise above that which is written."—"Make all things after the pattern showed thee in the mount." Regard not synods or councils, etc., instead of Christ.

5th. We must serve Christ with the talents we possess, and in the sphere which his providence may have assigned to us. Eph. 4 : 11–13. Some have *superior natural abilities*, a clear understanding, a sound judgment, quick discernment, acute penetration, and a retentive and ready memory. These too may have been improved by *education*. These sanctified by the grace of God may qualify for the ministerial office, etc.——Others possess *property*, 1 Tim. 6 : 17–19.——Others have *time*.——Some have *influence*, arising from talent, learning, wealth, rank,

and office.——Some have office in the Church—in the Sunday-school, etc. etc., Rom. 12 : 6-8.

These talents should be consecrated for the good of the Church to which we respectively belong, providing our union with that Church has been the result of a careful, conscientious, and satisfactory investigation of its accordance with the primitive churches and the will of Christ.——These talents are to be employed for the salvation of our families, friends, neighbors, and the whole world.

6th. This service comprehends *love to our Divine Master, and rejoicing in his triumphs*. "We love him because he first loved us." "The love of Christ constraineth us," etc. There can be no cheerful, effective, and acceptable service without this love. And the proof of our love is that we consecrate all that we have and are to his service, that we rejoice when our instrumentality and that of others are crowned with success, and that the Saviour is thereby glorified.

Lastly. This service implies *diligence*. "Fervent in Spirit," etc. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do," etc. Rom. 1 : 9; Col. 3 : 23.——*Cheerfulness*, a willing mind, Deut. 28 : 47. "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver;"——with *fidelity*, "Be thou faithful," etc.

II. THE REWARD TO BE CONFERRED UPON THE SERVANTS OF CHRIST. "Him will my Father honor."

The service of Christ will not procure the honors of the world, John 15 : 19. Riches, secular office and power, warriors, conquerors, etc., are honored by the men of the world, while Christians, the servants of God, the salt of the earth, and the light of the world, are forgotten.——But God forgets them not——they shall be honored. "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love," etc. Heb. 6 : 10. A cup of cold water—the widow's mite, shall not be forgotten. All is treasured up in the book of God's remembrance.——Observe,

1st. God sometimes *honors his people in this world*. He qualifies and appoints them as instruments to spread his cause and advance his glory. That is an honor—to be employed by and for the King of kings, etc.——He frequently crowns their efforts with success. They instruct the ignorant, they warn the careless, they direct the inquirer, etc. etc., they *save souls from death*. What an honor! How mean the services of warriors, etc., compared with this!——"Be not weary in well-doing, for," etc. "Your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord." "They that sow in tears," etc. Ps. 126 : 5, 6.

2d. He honors them with *communion with himself*, John 14 : 23. Even as favorite servants are honored by their master's intimate intercourse with them, so the High and Lofty One dwelleth with his contrite but useful servants, and honors them by his gracious presence. He is with them to do them good, to protect them, and to save them in every season.

3d. They shall be honored *at the hour of death*, when the honors of the world shall come to nought. Through the blessing of God they have not lived in vain.——Then godliness is seen in them to be profitable for all things. Their death is influential. God is with them——to finish his work. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is

the death of his saints." Angels will convey their souls to Abraham's bosom. This was an honor conferred upon Lazarus the beggar—— while the rich man was driven away in his wickedness. Rev. 14 : 18.

4th. They shall be honored *at the day of judgment*. This will be the great day when God will bestow infinite honor upon his servants. The day when the Son of man shall come in his glory. Matt. 24 : 29-31; 25 : 31, etc.; 2 Thess. 1 : 7-9. What a blessing to be honored then! At this solemn and momentous period

(1.) God will make an honorable *distinction* between his servants and his enemies, Mal. 3 : 18. He will place them, the sheep, at his right hand, etc. etc. See Matt. 25 : 32, 33.

(2.) He will *confess them, and approve their services* before assembled worlds. "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father and his holy angels." He will then say to them, "Well done," etc. Thy services are approved—they have had an influence on eternity. Some are at my right hand through thy instrumentality. Some will occupy a throne and wear a crown through thee. Hear it, ye sons of perdition; hear it, ye righteous; hear it, ye angels and archangels, this is the man who served me through evil and through good report, etc. etc. "Well done, good and faithful servant," etc. —Here we may be the subjects of obloquy and scorn; our motives may be misrepresented; men may deem us unworthy of their company; but we refer to the grand tribunal, and anticipate the fulfilment of this promise then, "Him will my Father honor."

(3.) He will honor them by *an admission into his kingdom*, where they shall live and reign forever and ever. "Come, ye blessed." "They shall be mine," etc. "In God's presence is fulness of joy," etc. They shall dwell in the mansions, in the kingdom prepared for them. They shall enter the inheritance incorruptible, etc. They shall enjoy rest after toil; honor after their shame; peace after their conflicts; pleasure after their sorrows; safety after all their fears and dangers; a crown and a sceptre after their conquests. "I have fought a good fight," etc.——They shall be honored with the presence of Christ there. "Where I am, there also shall my servant be," v. 26; and see John 17 : 24.

APPLICATION.

- 1st. What is your character? Servants of God, or servants of sin?
- 2d. If as servants you are useful, let all the glory be given to God.
- 3d. Anticipate the reward.

CHRIST THE FOUNDATION.

"Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste."—ISA. 28 : 16.

No subjects are so worthy of consideration as those which relate to Jesus Christ, and no other can be adopted as topics for meditation with greater advantage.——The various figures which the sacred writers

apply to Christ very strikingly represent his excellency and glory. — At the period when Isaiah wrote these words, the Jews were sunk into a shocking state of pride and drunkenness, v. 7. Nay, so extreme were their depravity and infidelity that they defied death, and judgment, and hell, v. 15. Such a state was sufficient, one would think, to cause God to consume them with the breath of his mouth. — But he is long-suffering and very merciful. He therefore in the text made them another offer of mercy, that they might escape impending wrath.

I. THE FOUNDATION WHICH GOD HAS LAID FOR THE SUPPORT OF HIS CHURCH.

1st. This Foundation was *necessary*. Man being a guilty and ruined sinner, is excluded from the Divine favor. His purity—his righteousness, is lost—he has nothing on which to rest for salvation.

2d. What man could not do *was planned in the counsels of God*. Hence the whole plan of salvation is said to be “according to the will of God the Father,” Gal. 1:4; Eph. 1:9, 10; Acts 2:23. When a magnificent palace or temple is to be erected, the most able architects are appointed to devise plans for the work. So the infinite Jehovah devised the sacrifice of his Son for the foundation of his Church. —

3d. *That Christ in his mediatorial work is the foundation laid*. This is evident from the definition which Peter gives of the text. He quotes the text itself, 1 Pet. 2:6. See also Acts 4:11; 1 Cor. 3:11. That God had ordained Christ to become the foundation of the sinner’s faith and hope was proclaimed in the first promise, “The seed of the woman,” etc. The patriarchs rejoiced in the knowledge of it. The Jewish ritual—and the ancient prophets proclaimed it. “When the fulness of time,” etc. etc. Then the foundation was laid. Christ by dying satisfied the claims of Divine justice, etc. etc.

II. THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST AS A FOUNDATION. It is called “a stone,”

1st. To indicate *strength and stability*. Think of the myriads he would have to save—of the dangers from which he would have to deliver them—of the trials in which he would have to support them. Hence it was necessary for the foundation to be strong and stable. “I have laid help upon one that is mighty,” etc. He is the “Mighty God;” he has “all power,” etc. In the ancient temple Solomon erected two pillars of brass; the one he called *Jachin*, that is, “He is established;” and the other he called *Boaz*, that is, “strength.” They typified the invisible strength and stability of the Church. The priesthood and government of Christ are these two pillars which support the mighty mass of building, the Church. The ancient poets fabled one Atlas as bearing the whole globe on his shoulders; but Christ really had “the government” of the whole Church, the whole universe “on his shoulder,” Isa. 9:6. Hence the security of those who rest upon him. Ps. 46; Matt. 7:24, 25; Ps. 125:1.

2d. To indicate *durability*. Stone, or rocks, are durable, continuing from one generation to another. — So is this Foundation. “Our fathers trusted in thee,” etc. It has lasted through every age, and withstood every attack, and it will endure longer than the sun. —

"And thou, Lord," Heb. 1 : 10, 11; "Jesus Christ, the same," etc. See Isa. 54 : 10.

Hence *life* is attributed to this stone, 1 Peter 2 : 4. He communicates life to the dead and cold stones and marble, or lifeless sinners, who may be placed upon him. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." "Whoso eateth my flesh," etc.

3d. It is called, a *Tried Stone*. God committed to Christ the salvation or deliverance of sinners from everlasting death, and he was faithful to him who appointed him.——He was the Antitype of all the types; all the prophecies were completed in him.——Tried by poverty, by reproach, by temptation, by cruel treatment in the hall of Herod, —before Pilate. Tried in Gethsemane, where he sweat, etc. Tried on the cross, where he "destroyed the works of the Devil;" and redeemed his people from everlasting bondage.——Tried by his people in every age, who have found the foundation good, strong, durable, and communicating life here and life everlasting. How many have tried him! Look abroad and see! Look at that great multitude in glory, Rev. 7 : 9, 10.

4th. He is a *precious Corner-Stone*.*

(1.) This denotes *union*. Take away the corner-stones, and the two sides of the house are separated the one from the other. So Christ, the precious corner-stone, cements all believers together in one body, Eph. 2 : 14, 15; he makes them one, whether rich or poor, etc., in mutual love he makes them all partakers of the same grace, etc. "That they all may be one," etc. He unites both Jews and Gentiles, 1 Cor. 12 : 12. He unites the Church militant and the Church triumphant.

(2.) *Beauty*. Much art and cost were anciently bestowed on the corner-stones, Ps. 144 : 12. They exhibited the skill of the workman, and the excellency of the material. The whole building appeared beautiful through them. Christ is the beauty of all God's building. See Ps. 45 : 2; Ezek. 16 : 14. We have no comeliness but what he puts upon us.

(3.) For *direction or example*. The corner-stone is for direction in a building. All other stones must be squared, and laid level with that, not further out nor in. Christ is the believer's rule, or example. All that is not done according to his command and example must be pulled down again. All must run parallel with Christ's doctrine or example, Matt. 11 : 29; John 13 : 15; 1 Pet. 2 : 21.

Hence it may well be called "precious." It is more precious than rubies, or all that earth can give.

5th. It is also called "*a sure foundation*." It must be so, if we refer to its *stability* and *durability* previously mentioned. The repetition of this quality is adopted to show its superiority to all other foundations. All others are deceitful, this is sure; all others are unsafe, this is secure;

* "The idea of the corner-stone, so often mentioned in Scripture, is not to be taken from modern or classical architecture, but from that of ruder ages. Imagine a massive stone, like one at Stonehenge, cut to a right angle, and laid in the building so that its two sides should lie along the two walls which meet at a corner, and thus binding them together that neither force nor weather could dis sever them."—BIBLE COMPANION.

all others have failed, this never did and never will fail. — T sinner ready to perish, the backslider returning to God, the tempted harassed soul, the afflicted, poverty-stricken, and persecuted Christian has ever found it sure, and it has never failed in a dying hour. It will be found sure when the heavens shall pass away, and amid all the solemnities of the day of judgment. — Sure! Only think who the Architect, who laid it. Sure! Think where it is laid! not on the mutable earth, but in Zion—in the counsels of the Infinite Mind. Sure! When was it laid? Before the foundation of the world. Sure! How vain have been all the attempts of infidels, etc., to destroy it!

III. THE CHARACTER AND SAFETY OF BELIEVERS. “He that believeth shall not make haste.”

1st. *The Character.* The person who believes has felt the need of the foundation. — He has abandoned all other foundations, as refuge of lies, as shifting sand. — He has become acquainted with the foundation, highly approves of it, perceives its infinite superiority, apprehends that it is just the foundation to sustain his guilty soul from sinking into perdition; therefore he is enabled, through divine grace, to cast himself upon the foundation which God has laid in Zion. Even as one stone after another is laid upon the foundation, so the sinner built upon Christ. This is the analogy. 1 Pet. 2 : 4-6. He receives and depends upon the truth, contained in so many promises, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

2d. *The safety of believers.* “Shall not make haste.” Even as an edifice founded upon a rock has for ages defied the rain, the wind, the stormy blast, and the desolating whirlwind, and will defy them for ages more; so settled, so securely fixed, is the Christian. Spiritual truth move him not. “He does not make haste.” He shall not be seen in a state of trepidation, fear, and hurry. He “knows whom he has believed,” etc. How often are self-righteous persons surprised by conscience, by affliction, by death! Then they make haste; they are full of fear, mental commotion, uncertainty; they know not what to do. “There is no peace,” etc. Like a person putting his foot on the ground, he feels it moving under him. — But the Christian can say,

Now I have found the ground wherein,
Sure my soul's anchor may remain!
The wounds of Jesus for my sin,
The lamb of God, for sinners slain!
On him alone my soul shall stay,
When heaven and earth shall pass away.

Yes, at the great last day, myriads shall *make haste*; they shall call the rocks, etc. Kings and nobles, the rich and mighty, statesmen and warriors, lovers of pleasure, despisers of Christ, shall then *make haste*. But the Christian shall be calm, serene, triumphant. “Lo, this is God, I have waited for him,” etc. “He that believeth shall not be ashamed.” — “He that believeth shall not be confounded.”

APPLICATION.

1st. The text is an intimation to sinners that all their refuges, foundations, will be found utterly worthless; see v. 17.

2d. It affords encouragement to the inquiring penitent.

8d. Behold the riches of Divine grace! Such a foundation for guilty man! So precious a Saviour for worthless sinners!

PRAYER FOR DELIVERANCE FROM THE PRESENT AND EVERLASTING SOCIETY OF WICKED MEN.

"Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men."—Ps. 26 : 9.

THE most convincing proof of a man's regeneration is, his detestation of sin, and his shunning the company of the wicked. Holiness has become the element in which he loves to breathe, and Christians his companions with whom he delights to associate. He says, like David, "I am a companion," etc., Ps. 119 : 63. Such a change corresponds with the will of God, 2 Cor. 6 : 14–18. This Psalm cannot be read without perceiving the spirituality of David's mind; nor without admiring his earnest desires to be delivered from the final state of the wicked, and to be gathered with the righteous to the right hand of God.

I. THE GROUND OF THE PSALMIST'S PLEA.

This is given in the preceding verses. He declares before God—

That he trusted in him, v. 1, or he depended on him for salvation. By faith he was interested in the covenant, 2 Sam. 23 : 5, and this faith was operative;—

It produced integrity, holy and upright conduct; "I have walked," etc., v. 1.

He invoked Divine investigation of his conduct, v. 1, 2. "Search me, O God," etc. Ps. 139 : 23, 24.

He delighted in the Divine loving-kindness, as the source of his felicity, v. 3.

He avoided evil associations, v. 4, nay, *hated* the congregation of evil-doers.

He delighted in Divine worship, and all its services, v. 6–8.

Therefore, in consideration of his dependence upon Christ alone for salvation, as proved by the fruits of holiness, he beseeches God, saying "Gather not my soul," etc. Such a faith, with such fruits, will never prove abortive. The man who has it, shall not be gathered with sinners.

II. THE IMPORT OF THE PRAYER.

1st. *A belief in the immortality of the soul.* The body must perish. All flesh is as grass. But the soul, as the Scriptures prove, must survive the body and live forever. That which is immortal must be infinitely valuable. Consequently,

2d. The Christian is *more solicitous about the welfare of his soul than his body.* He feels the force of the Redeemer's words, "What shall it

profit a man," etc. "Fear not those who can kill the body," etc.—— And yet, with multitudes, the body engrosses all the attention. Many even seem to *die* as regardless of their souls as if they had none. They only think and talk of the physician and lawyer; of their disorder and temporal concerns. Some persons, too, who cannot possibly possess a good hope through grace, with great composure speak of their dissolution, and arrange the circumstances of their funeral. Scarcely a word escapes them concerning the soul. But the soul is the man! It is the immaterial, the immortal part. Oh, says the Christian, it is my precious soul that most concerns me! I feel comparatively indifferent as to the destiny of my body. Let wild beasts devour it; let the ocean swallow it up; let the flames consume it; let the winds scatter it; if I may but conclude that my soul shall be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. "Gather not my soul with sinners."

3d. *A conviction that, hereafter, the souls of all men must be gathered into eternity.* The time of man is but limited here.

(1.) This will be at *death*. No human device or expedient can prevent this. "There is no man that hath power," Ecc. 8 : 8. "We must needs die." Prayers, tears, physicians, wealth, power, cannot stay the ravages of mortality. "What man is he that liveth and shall not see death?"——Then the soul departs to God, who gave it,——to have its place and portion assigned till the day of judgment.——At death the righteous are "gathered to their fathers" who died in the faith; while "the wicked is driven away in his wickedness." Hence the Christian may well cry, "Gather not," etc.

(2.) This will be especially the case at *the day of judgment*. Here the precious and vile, the chaff and the wheat, the tares and the precious grain, mingle together; but then Christ the Judge will gather all nations to his bar, and make an everlasting separation. See this solemnly stated in Matt. 13 : 30, 39-42; 24 : 31; 25 : 31, etc. There have been former separations of an awful character, but none so solemn as this. As in former times God cared for his people, so he will then. Refer to the time of the flood: Noah and his family were preserved in the ark while the world was drowned. At the burning of Sodom, Lot was conducted by an angel to a place of safety. When Jerusalem was destroyed by the Chaldeans, a mark was set on the foreheads of the men who sighed and cried for the prevailing abominations. Thus shall it be with the saints at the last day; they shall be caught up together with the Lord in the air, while the earth and all its works shall be burnt up. "They shall be mine," etc., Mal. 3 : 17, 18.——Then how important the prayer, "Gather." Let my portion be with the righteous, not with the wicked; then let me be thy jewel, and not a reprobate.——"The Lord grant that I may obtain mercy of the Lord in that day!" 2 Tim. 1 : 18.

4th. *A conviction that God might justly gather the soul with sinners.* Every Christian can say,

"I know I have deserved to die,
Yet save me through thy grace."

Yes, if God were to lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, I should be banished from thy presence, etc. "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?" "Thy law is

exceeding broad," and searching; it penetrates my inmost recesses, etc. O "Gather not my soul"! etc. "Deliver me from going down into the pit; thou hast found a ransom—yea a substitute for me."

5th. That unless *God undertook for him, he would be gathered with sinners*. No human being can save a soul from death. Neither men nor angels can effect it.—— Salvation belongs to God alone. While he invites us to accept it through Christ, let us in faith go and exclaim, "Gather not," etc.

III. THE REASON OF HIS PECULIAR DREAD OF BEING GATHERED WITH THE WICKED.

1st. On account of *their character*. "Sinners and bloody men." The life of David was at this time hunted by Saul.—— The world is full of sinners and bloody men. What would they not do, if unrestrained by the law? There have been bloody men under the mask of religion. Witness the persecuting spirit of Popery—Antichrist. What rivers of blood has he created!—— Think of the infernal spirit of such men, how rectitude, conscience, humanity, etc., have been violated by them. They are hateful, and hating one another. Well might David say, "Woe is me," etc., Ps. 120 : 5-7. O, to be associated with such men forever, when their depraved spirits shall be immortalized, and rendered fierce by the torments of perdition!— My God, "Gather not my soul," etc.

2d. This prayer is prompted by the consideration of *their awful doom*. One text is sufficient, "The wicked shall be turned into hell with," etc. "Gather not," etc.

3d. This prayer is prompted by the *hope* within him which anticipates the raptures of the blessed. "Blessed be the God, etc., who hath begotten us again to a lively hope," etc. 1 Pet. 1 : 3, 4.—— There is the royal city—the city of the great king, whose gates are pearl, and the streets of which are laid with pure gold, let me be gathered there.—— Wonderful is the society of heaven! Angels, archangels, glorified saints, my friends not lost, but gone before; O gather me to them! Gather me to the employments of heaven, so rapturous and ecstatic! Let me tune my harp and sing my song of praise with all thy ransomed Church in glory! The honors and glories of this world are rapidly vanishing; gather me to the place where honor is immortal, and where glory grows forever. There bedeck my head with the crown of life thou hast promised me; give me the palm of victory, and let me walk with Christ in raiment whiter than the snow, and brighter than the light! In this world nothing satisfies long—everything eventually falls upon my mind; O gather me to thy presence where there is fulness of joy, and to thy right hand where there are pleasures forever more! Gather me to that immortal feast, where I shall eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God, and drink of the pure river, the water of life, which proceedeth from God and the Lamb. "Then shall I hunger no more," etc. Rev. 7 : 16, 17.

APPLICATION.

1st. It is lamentable how few adopt this prayer. The soul is neglected.

2d. The persons who will not be gathered with sinners, are those who make a covenant with him by sacrifice—even the sacrifice of Christ. Ps. 50: 5.

3d. Such need not fear the terrors of death or judgment. He will gather them with his arm, his voice shall dispel their fears, "Come, ye blessed," etc.

EARLY PIETY.

"Those that seek me early shall find me."—Prov. 8: 17.

THE importance of early piety is frequently represented in the Scriptures. — The mind of Solomon in his declining life was deeply impressed with the subject. He then doubtless thought of the follies of his youthful days, and the degeneracy of his manhood, which occasioned bitter repentance. What advantages resulting from early piety had he lost; what sins had he committed, what wrath had he incurred! No wonder that he should speak with so much pathos to his son Rehoboam: "My son, if thine heart be wise," etc. Prov. 23: 15. — He well knew that it was easier to seek the Lord in early life than in the time of old age, and that there was a greater possibility of finding him in the days of youth.

It is generally supposed that, by Wisdom, in this chapter, Christ, the personal Wisdom of God, is to be understood, who is called the Word, the Word of God, and the Wisdom of God.

I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN SEEKING THE LORD?

1st. *A deep conviction of the need of Christ.* Man has lost the Divine favor; by reason of his apostacy he is excluded from it. He is in a lost condition. The Scripture representations of man's salvation imply man's apostacy, ruin, and exposure to death. Salvation implies a state of danger; redemption, a state of captivity; reconciliation, a state of enmity; Christ's bearing the curse, that man was under that curse. This is the state of all, whether old or young, etc. — Such need pardon, renovation, and acceptance with God.

2d. *A knowledge of the Divine method of seeking Divine acceptance.* This is prescribed in the Scriptures alone. There Jesus is exhibited as the way, the truth, etc.—as the Redeemer—the Saviour of sinners. The nature of his sacrifice must be understood—that he offered himself to God for guilty man; and that no other method can be valid. Blessed truth! there is a full and free salvation in Christ for the most guilty sinners! Ye young, beware of seducers! Superstition, from her temple, prescribes gloomy and toilsome ceremonies and penances as the price of rest. Pleasure, looking from her window, laughs in the inquirer's face, and says, "Let us eat and drink," etc. False teachers, sitting down in the chair of Moses, cry, "Reform your habits, and God will be at peace with you." The only safe and infallible directions are, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," etc. etc.

3d. *The actual use of the appointed method of salvation.* That plan is approved, admired, loved. He who seeks the Divine favor comes to Christ, believes in him, and has no confidence in the flesh.

4th. *A conviction that Christ alone can yield substantial happiness.* His favor is life, and his loving-kindness is better than life. The pleasures of sense, the amusements of the world, earthly possessions, honor, pomp, and power, can yield no real and lasting satisfaction; it is only to be found in Christ, "the chief among ten thousand," etc., of whom true Christians can say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee," etc. Let the young remember that if they could rush to the enjoyment of all the pleasures which the world can give, the only result would be a conviction like that expressed by Solomon, "Vanity of vanities," etc.

5th. *Ardent desire and firm resolution to obtain an interest in Christ.* It is a business respecting the welfare of my immortal spirit, therefore I must seek Christ earnestly. I can never be happy without him, without his pardon, his Spirit, etc., therefore I will seek him. Without him my life will be but a dungeon, my deathbed a scene of horrors, and my future state the blackness of darkness forever. I will therefore seek the Lord, while he may be found, etc.

II. THAT THEY WHO SEEK THE LORD SHALL FIND HIM.

1st. *This is certain.* "He never said to the house of Jacob, seek ye me in vain." It is his glory to save—it was the design of his incarnation, sufferings, and death. His power and his willingness to save are proclaimed in all the promises and invitations of the Gospel.

2d. Those who find him, obtain all spiritual blessings. Deliverance from guilt and condemnation, and from the terrors of the wrath to come. — They enjoy peace with God, and receive grace to help in every time of need. They are adopted into God's family, and have communion with the King of heaven. They enjoy all the ordinances and privileges of the Church.

3d. Those who find Christ are *honorably and usefully employed by him.* As soldiers to fight his battles; as laborers, servants, etc.

4th. Those who find Christ, *are possessed of the hope of living and reigning with him forever.* "Ye have continued with me in my temptations, and now I appoint unto you a kingdom."

III. THE IMPORTANCE AND ADVANTAGES OF SEEKING CHRIST EARLY.

1st. *Christ takes peculiar pleasure in the consecration of the young to his service.* "I love those that love me." The great Shepherd of the sheep gathers the lambs with his arm, Isa. 40: 11. In the days of his flesh he loved the young, Mark 10: 14, 16. He patronized the children's hosannahs, Matt. 21: 15, 16. The love of God to the young, is expressed by the love which the father had to his prodigal son, Luke 15: 17-20. Hence the favor of God to Josiah, 2 Kings 22: 19, 20.

2d. *Youth is the most favorable season for seeking the Lord.* The cares of business, which occupy so much of the time and the thoughts of men in after life, and so often limit and mar their devotions, have not yet entangled the young. The world cannot oppose them in such a variety

OF SERMONS.

of ways, and to such a degree as it will afterwards. Light are their hearts compared with those which are overcharged with the cares of this life. The sooner, young friends, you seek him, the fewer provocations there will be in you to grieve the Holy Spirit in striving with you; the less stupid and hardened you will be in sin; the less unyielding to the impressions of his grace; the less confirmed in the habits of sin; the less liable to the temptations of Satan, etc.

3d. The young are *more adapted for usefulness in the kingdom of Christ* than those who repent at a later period of life. When an old man is converted, the best of his days, the strength of his mind, the fervency of his desires, are in a great measure expended; he hath nothing but the blind and the lame to present for sacrifice. — But it is quite otherwise with the young. What knowledge, experience, may they accumulate in the morning of their days! If they should live to three-score years and ten, what effective service may they give to Christ!

4th. The longer a person lives without Christ *the greater the probability that he will never be converted at all.* — Sin is of a hardening character — how few are converted in middle life — how fewer still in the time of old age! When the flower of youth is gone, there is but little hope of a person's conversion and salvation. — The far greater part of God's people have sought the Lord in early life, before they have plunged deep into the cares of the world, and it seldom happens that any one is converted at a later period.

5th. *Now is the only time of which you can be certain.* — “Boast not thyself of to-morrow,” etc. You are here to-day, to-morrow you may become a corpse. Many who have been as healthy, as strong, and as gay as you are, have been taken away with a stroke. Now therefore is the accepted time, etc. “To-day, if ye will hear his voice,” etc. Death generally comes at a time least expected.

APPLICATION.

1st. Despise not the voice of Wisdom, as given through Solomon. See Eccl. 11 : 9.

2d. How pleasing must be the reflections of those who sought the Lord early, and have continued to seek him! “He will not cast you off at the time of old age,” etc. Ps. 71 : 9. He will be with you to old age. Isa. 46 : 4.

3d. Let the aged begin to seek the Lord, and not despair.

CHRISTIAN WARFARE FOLLOWED BY EXALTED HONOR.

“He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.” — Rev. 3 : 5.

THE text is a part of a message to the Church at Sardis, and, like all the other messages sent to the Asiatic Churches, it consists of particulars which ought to instruct and impress the Church at the present day.

The Redeemer knows the state of his Church now; he marks what is amiss, and reproves it; he acknowledges what is good and holy, and commends it. He excites to amendment by promises of pardon; and he animates to warfare and victory by the hope of eternal glory. — With regard to the Asiatic Churches, these motives were sadly disregarded, and they became awful monuments of disobedience. Doubtless for awhile the evil was arrested, and many persons were corrected and saved. Happy they who receive instruction from those examples! "He that hath an ear," etc., ver. 5.

The Christian's life is one of warfare, but it will be followed by endless honor. How different their position from that of the wicked, who have their good things here, but their evil things hereafter! — But a blessed exchange awaits the righteous. They shall receive a paradise instead of a desert; the peace of heaven instead of raging tempests; the brightness of celestial light instead of black and gloomy clouds; pure and loving friends instead of polluted and malignant enemies; the tree of life instead of the thorns and briers of a wilderness, deadly and unwholesome; white raiment, a crown of life, and distinguished honor before assembled myriads at the day of judgment, instead of awaking to shame and everlasting contempt.

I. THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE.

The language refers to spiritual conflict which the Christian must maintain, or he will be overcome and disgraced at last. Hence he is called a soldier; he is to "fight the good fight of faith," to "war a good warfare," and to "lay hold on eternal life." — This conflict implies,

1st. *Enemies.* These are numerous, but the following are the principal:

(1.) The Christian has to overcome *the depraved propensities of his nature.* Although he has been regenerated by the Spirit, made to hate sin, and to love purity, yet those propensities are not eradicated. They often rise, struggle to gain the mastery and to destroy his peace. Hence it is said, "The Spirit lusteth against the flesh," Gal. 5: 17; i. e., the Spirit of God stirs up motions and desires in the saints contrary to those of the flesh, or unrenewed part in man, and inclines them to desire and attempt the subjugation of it. The passions, appetites, and affections of men are opposed to what is good. These must be overcome. Hence we are directed to fight against "the lusts which war in our members" — to "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." He that knows the state of his heart, knows and feels the struggle, the conflict within him.

(2.) He has to overcome *the world.* It is full of temptations and snares, arising from its pleasures, its cares, its pursuits, its possessions. See 2 Cor. 6: 17. There is "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," the very tendency of which is to rob us of our spirituality, and to cheat us of heaven. 1 John 2: 15-17. See James 4: 4. The men of the world are the children of Satan, and are therefore opposed to Christians. See John 15: 18, 19. This world must be overcome; the Christian must "keep himself unspotted from the

world." To overcome it is a sure sign of spiritual birth, and living faith, 1 John 5 : 4, 5.

(3.) The Christian has to overcome *Satan*, called "the Prince of the power of the air," Eph. 2 : 2, and "the Prince of this world."——To what danger then is the Christian exposed! As it is in other cases, so it is here; our greatest danger lies in not feeling our danger, and so not being prepared to meet it. Satan bears an inveterate hatred against the saints, and seeks nothing less than their eternal perdition. He hates them because they have been rescued from his power, and taken up arms against him; nothing will satisfy him but their eternal ruin.——He is a *mighty enemy*, mightier than they are, and unless they have Omnipotent aid, they are no match for him.——The power of wicked spirits, abstractedly considered, is but little known, but viewed as the god of this world, Satan has all its temptations in alliance with himself, and with these he has cast down many mighty, yea, many strong men have been slain by him. He is an *artful enemy*. We are told of the "wiles of the Devil," hiding his designs, and falling upon us when we least expect it. He has a strong party within us, even our propensities, which he studies and suits his temptations to them, Eph. 4 : 14. He was victorious with our first parents when he had no party within them; much greater therefore is the danger now.——Hence the conflict is arduous.

The Christian too has to contend with persecution, slander, afflictions, death.

2d. The conflict implies that *armor is provided*. The armor is described, Eph. 6 : 13. The Apostle calls it "the armor of God;" it is of Divine workmanship, and is actually bestowed on the Christian soldier. It is suited to defend his mind against all the attacks of his enemies. It is well adapted to give strength and heroism to him in the day of battle, 1 Thess. 5 : 8.

In general, this armor is *the grace of the Gospel*, believed in, and trusted in; this is opposed to human might or strength, Eph. 6 : 10.——In common warfare, soldiers are encouraged to think highly of their strength; but in this it is quite the reverse, 2 Tim. 2 : 1.——It is *whole or perfect armor*, sufficient to defend the believer in every part. "Truth" is a girdle to strengthen; "righteousness" a breastplate; the "Gospel" of peace as shoes by which we shall be able to trample upon the lion and the adder, the young lion and the dragon; "faith" is a shield; salvation, the hope of eternal life, a helmet.——All this armor is to be drawn from the truths of the Gospel.

3d. It implies *contest*. Without a contest there can be no victory. The enemies of the Christian, though engaged in a bad cause, are not cowards; they will not flee as fugitives from the field; they will surrender no point unless compelled by the valor and force of the spiritual conqueror.——Therefore when the assault is made upon the Christian, he is to have on the armor of God, and to resist steadfast in the faith. Armor is of no avail unless it is used.

4th. It implies *victory*. None can obtain it without fighting. Victory is promised to the faithful soldier, and victory is sure. God is on his side. If he were left to himself, there could be only disgrace and ruin. How could a child of earth, one made of the dust, hope to go forth with

success against such powerful foes? But his Captain is the Son of God, and his connection with him gives the hope of victory. As surely as he overcame, so shall his soldiers. He looks down from his high abode, and by his Spirit strengthens and nerves the feeble warrior *for* the fight, *in* the fight, and *through* the fight. That Spirit awakens and increases faith under every assault—it induces prayer—it produces hope—it fires the soul with the prospect of the Conqueror's harp, and palm, and crown.

By our illustrious General fired,
We no extremes would fear;
Prepared to struggle and to bleed,
If thou, our Lord, be near.

We'll trace the footsteps thou hast drawn
To triumph and renown;
Nor shun thy combat and thy cross,
May we but share thy crown.

II. THIS WARFARE WILL BE FOLLOWED BY DISTINGUISHED AND EVERLASTING HONORS.

"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment," etc. This is the reward of the spiritual conqueror. Earthly conquerors have received the highest honors.—The Christian soldier shall receive honors, compared with which those of worldly heroes are but vanity and vexation of spirit. Refer to the glorious promises made, ch. 2: 7, 10, 17; ch. 3: 12, 21.—The promise in the text implies,

1st. *Purity*. "Shall be clothed in white raiment." They shall appear there as those who have not "defiled their garments," but have been kept "unspotted from the world." White raiment was the emblem of purity; see v. 4. In ch. 2: 17, it is said, "I will give him a *white stone*,"* the token of full and everlasting justification and purity. Formerly his sins were as scarlet, and red like crimson, but redeeming blood gives the soul here, and perfectly there, a snowy whiteness. "He shall be clothed in white raiment;" "I will present him faultless before," etc. Having lived by faith in me, and conquered every sinful temptation; having defeated Satan, and vanquished the world, through my grace, he shall appear there, "not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing."

2d. *Dignity*. Anciently white raiment was the attire of priests and kings. It is said that Christians shall be "kings and priests unto God forever;" that they shall "sit upon thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel;" and that they shall "reign forever and ever." In this world they are regarded as the offscouring of all things, and the filth of the world, etc., but at the judgment day they shall be "clothed in white raiment;" they shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, etc. What will their despisers, their persecutors, and their murderers, think, and feel, then?

* "In heathen courts of judicature, a person's condemnation was announced to him by giving him a black stone; and his acquittal, by giving him a white stone.—In agonistical games, the judges awarded the prizes by the use of these stones; a *white one*, with the name of the person and the value of the prize, being given to such as were victorious."—For further illustration, see BIBLE COMPANION, under the word, Stone.

3d. *Joy.* White garments were worn on festive occasions of joy. And will not the Christian have joy then? The battle will be over and the victory won; the conflict, the agony, the cruel strife, will be past, and the crown will be given. While he shall see his enemies clothed with shame, he shall hear a voice saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant," etc.

4th. The language is expressive of *eternal security*. "I will not blot his name out of the book of life." "He that is holy let him be holy still." He did run well, and nothing hindered. He fought, not as uncertainly, not as one beating the air, but as a faithful soldier, enduring hardness, and fighting on to the last. I loved him, died for him, called him, saved him — he has loved me and my cause; he has fought under my banner, and resisted unto death. I cannot, therefore, erase his name from the book of life. It shall remain legible there forever. — The names of cowards will then appear to have been blotted out. At first, doubtless, great were their pretences, flaming their zeal, and loud their boasts, but they passed away as the morning cloud, etc.

5th. *The victorious soldier shall then be acknowledged.* "I will confess his name," etc. What an honor! Christ will then deliver up his kingdom to the Father, and also all the subjects of it. "Behold I, and the children whom thou hast given me!" As if he called each by his name, and took each by his hand, and presented him to his Father, as the person whom he wished to be honored: "This is the man who responded to the call of my Gospel, and enlisted under my banner. He was not ashamed of me and of my words, but was valiant for the truth, despising all things for the excellency of my cross, and was faithful unto death. I, therefore, confess him as such before thee, and, as the reward of the travail of my soul, I solicit for him thy eternal favor. Give him a place in thy kingdom, and reveal to him the glories of eternity. Ye angels, honor him; let him be your associate forever."

APPLICATION.

1st. Believers have great cause to be patient in tribulations. These lead to victory, and victory to pure enjoyment and unspeakable honor.

2d. Many never conquer who profess to fight. They have the appearance, the dress of soldiers but no more. They have the soldier's name, but not his heart.

CHRISTIAN STEADFASTNESS.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." — 1 Cor. 15 : 58.

THE design of the Apostle is to establish the doctrine of the resurrection. His arguments are cogent and invincible; his description sublime and enrapturing. — Some persons in the Corinthian Church called in question the leading principles of the Gospel, alleging that they were too mysterious for belief, and that they could not admit what they could

not comprehend. Too much of the same spirit prevails now.—— resurrection of the body is a glorious doctrine in the estimation of Christian; it affords a powerful motive to diligence and perseverance in the work of the Lord.

I. THE CHARACTER OF THE PERSONS ADDRESSED: "Beloved brethren."

1st. *They were believers.* They had heard, received, and believed the Gospel, and were saved, v. 1, 2.

2d. *They were brethren.* The same faith which united them to Christ united them also to one another. "They gave themselves first to the Lord," etc. They are called "the Church of God, the sanctified Christ Jesus, called to be saints," ch. 1 : 2. They had believed in the same Jesus, had been regenerated by the same Spirit, etc. etc.

3d. *They were beloved brethren.* "Therefore, my beloved brethren, Beloved especially by Christ, being a part of his flock purchased by his blood—— and they are, if true believers, dear to each other—— they love as brethren.

II. THE ADVICE GIVEN TO THEM: "Be steadfast."

1st. *The advice refers to the doctrines of the Gospel:* the divinity, sacrifice, and resurrection, of Christ, as stated, v. 1-8, and the resurrection of the saints, and their immortal happiness, v. 12, etc. These doctrines were opposed, and will ever be opposed by the carnal mind.

(1.) The Apostle advises them to be steadfast. The truths of the Gospel are to be *steadfastly maintained*. "Be steadfast." Be established in your own minds; be rooted and grounded in the truth. Well-built upon the true foundation. Recognize the vital importance of those truths—— ardently love them.

(2.) They must be *steadfastly defended*. "Be able to give a reason of the hope that is in you." Labor to understand them, to feel their power. "Contend earnestly for the faith." Be not overcome or silenced by the sophistry, carnal policy, and mere declamation of the antagonists.

(3.) *Steadfastly exemplify their practical influence.* Glory in your union with Christ and his people. It is most honorable. Let your light shine. In the family, in your calling, in your associations, in the Church, in the world, show by your behavior that you are a Christian——that you are not ashamed of Christ, his cause, and his people. Be a "faithful servant," and "be faithful to death."

2d. In maintaining these doctrines, *Christians are to be "immovable"* that is, they should persevere in their steadfastness. To be "immovable" is to have continued stability. Christians "should not be moved away," etc., Col. 1 : 23. "For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord," 1 Thess. 3 : 8. "Standing fast" is a military term, like that in 1 Cor. 16 : 13. Saints are here compared to an army, liable to attack, and standing firm against the enemy. The object of Satan is to divide and scatter them, in order to accomplish their defeat.

3d. *Christians are to be "unmovable."* They soon surrender the doctrines of the Gospel when they are moved from their profession——DO NOT BE MOVED (1.) By per-

cution. — (2.) By worldly temptations. — (3.) By the wiles of Satan. — (4.) By the dissensions of others from the truth.

As a motive to invincible adherence to the truth, think how Christ, the Apostles, the martyrs, and others, resisted unto blood.

3d. Christians are to be "*always abounding in the work of the Lord.*" The "work of the Lord" is that holy employment in which all his servants are engaged, the design of which is to advance his kingdom, and diffuse his glory in the world. It is the work of saving souls from death.

To abound in this work is to consecrate all our talents to his service. Some preach, exhort, pray, advise; some employ their influence, some their property, etc. — Whatever contributes to promote the cause of Christ, that is the work of the Lord, and it is to be the business of our lives.

In this work Christians are to *abound*. Preachers are to be instant in season, etc., to rebuke and exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. Those who hear are to take heed how they hear, etc. Those who pray are to pray always, without ceasing, with all prayer and supplication. Persons having influence, property, talents, of any kind, are to employ them as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Rom. 12: 6-11. "Be not weary," etc.

III. THE POWERFUL MOTIVE ASSIGNED. "Forasmuch."

1st. Ye know it from various promises. "In due season ye shall reap," etc. Heb. 6: 10.

2d. "It shall not be in vain." God will bless your efforts. Sinners shall be converted, or left without excuse.

3d. The work shall be followed with *an infinite reward*. The resurrection to eternal life insures this, and a blessed immortality is before us, Matt. 19: 28, 29. If we serve him, if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him. For, observe,

4th. The certainty of this reward is founded on the resurrection of Christ, v. 5-8. As sure as Christ rose, so shall his servants come forth to the resurrection of eternal life — to be then honorably and publicly rewarded.

THE HEAVENLY MULTITUDE.

"After this, I beheld, and lo, a great multitude," etc. — Rev. 7: 9, 10.

I. THE MAGNITUDE OF THIS AUGUST ASSEMBLY.

1st. The saints are apparently few on earth. — There are, however, frequently mistakes on this matter. See Elijah's complaint, 1 Kings 19: 10, 18. Selfishness causes this mistake. Many think that salvation is confined to their own sect.

2d. They shall be numerous when collected together; "a great multitude." The Gospel shall yet spread and mightily increase the number.

"All shall know me," etc. Blessed thought! every dying saint, and every dying infant, will swell that multitude. — Benevolence delights in the multitude of the saved. —

II. THE COMPONENT PARTS OF THE ASSEMBLY.

1st. Of all nations. A national convention, "a holy nation." — 2d. All kindreds. We shall know each other there. — 3d. All people. Every national distinction will then be annihilated. — 4th. All tongues. One tongue in heaven.

III. THE STATION THEY OCCUPY. "Stood before the throne," etc. Rev. 5 : 6.

1st. Expressive of their dependence for salvation. — 2d. Honor. 3d. Nearness to God. — 4th. Happiness and joy.

IV. THEIR APPEARANCE.

1st. White robes. (1.) Emblems of purity. (2.) of dignity. 2d. Palms in their hand. Emblems of victory and glory.

V. THEIR EMPLOYMENT. "They cried," etc.

1st. Their theme, Salvation. — 2d. Their holy energy and vehemence, "They cried." — 3d. Their harmony. They all "cried." All had been saved, and all gave praise.


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P R E F A C E.

THE very favorable reception which has been given to the *first* Volume of "Helps for the Pulpit," has encouraged the Author to issue a *second* volume. The sale of the first has far exceeded his expectation; and it is peculiarly gratifying to him, that the rapid sale of the first edition was not the result of advertisement, or the procuring of reviews, which are frequently partial and the result of favoritism. The Work has silently and ostentatiously produced its own sale.

The Author trusts that the Outlines and Sketches in this volume will not be inferior to those which have preceded. It has been his great object to furnish "helps," which, through the Divine influence, may arrest the attention of the careless, comfort and direct the penitent, solace the mourner, and edify the saint. Not that these "helps" are to be used verbatim, or that they are to be exactly copied. They are rather to be the suggestors, or the foundation of discourses, the result of thought awakened by the inspection of these "Helps for the Pulpit." If so used, they may be productive of the best results.

Let the Christian minister, though he may think himself but a feeble instrument, still "hold forth the word of life." Who can tell what effects one sermon will produce? It may put in operation a system of causes which may lead to the conversion of multitudes. In 1640, an obscure country clergyman supplied the pulpit of the Rev. Mr. Calamy, of London, and delivered a plain discourse from "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" There was a young man hearing it, a stranger in the metropolis, who had been for five years in the deepest despondency of mind; for three months he had been unwilling to speak a word, and when he did speak, it was with much observed disorder. When the unpolished clergyman was seen to enter the pulpit of the London divine, many of the congregation left the house, and this youthful invalid was entreated to do the same, but his physical debility prevented his compliance. He found the discourse a healing balm. He was relieved of his moral, mental, and soon of his corporeal maladies; began a new life of Christian activity, confidence, and joy; became influential in Church and State; published seven folio volumes, twenty-one quartos, thirty octavos; and is revered as the prince of divines. It was John Owen, who thus ascribed his religious health, etc., to a single sermon. He was never able to find out the residence, or even the name, of the

despised preacher to whose word he owed his freedom from a wasting melancholy. It seemed as if a spirit from a land of mysteries had touched him, and straightway vanished into heaven.

The great revival in 1680, which spread through the west of Scotland to the north of Ireland, was the result of one sermon preached by a young unordained minister, John Livingstone. Said the Rev. Mr. Fleming, of Cambuslang: "I can speak on sure ground, that nearly five hundred had a discernible change wrought in them; of whom most proved lively Christians afterwards. It was the sowing of a seed through Clydesdale, so that some of the most eminent Christians in that country could date either their conversion, or some remarkable confirmation of their case from that day."

Sometimes the first clause of a sermon may seize the attention of some leading mind, and never cease its transforming efficacy until that mind becomes an efficient advocate for God. Some plain statement, made without anticipating its effects, is often referred to by a grateful convert as the point on which his destiny was suspended. Sometimes even a word has produced great effects. "Oh, my hearers, the wrath to come! the wrath to come!"—these were the abrupt clauses that fell from the lips of an eminent orator, and sank like lead into the heart of one youth who could not rest till he had become qualified for an eminent station in the Christian ministry.—"God only is great," were the words of the eminent Massilon, and all his hearers rose and reverently bowed.—"Oh, eternity!" closed a discourse by M. Bridaine, and they seemed to concentrate into one sudden view the whole subject that had been discussed, and the audience were melted down, and not a few permanently humbled.

W. N.

I.—PRAYER FOR DIVINE MERCY.

"O satisfy us early with thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."
—Ps. 90 : 14.

IN prayer the mind ought always to be in a state suitable for that important exercise. — A deep sense of our sinfulness and impotency — an abiding conviction that we are frail and dying, and every moment liable to be called from time into eternity — and a full and constant assurance that God's mercy, through Christ, is unbounded, and adapted to prepare us for all exigencies—this is the state of mind necessary for feeling, fervent, and successful prayer. — The mind of Moses was in such a frame, as this Psalm sufficiently indicates. The preceding verses declare life to be short, uncertain, and full of sorrow, and no Christian can attentively read them without feeling the force and appropriateness of his prayer, "O satisfy us," etc. Observe,

I. THAT MAN NEEDS DIVINE MERCY.

This is uniformly stated by the sacred penman, but it will appear more obvious by considering the circumstances in which man is placed :

(1.) *As a sinner.* Stated ver. 7 and 8. Here man is recognized in his relationship to the Divine Being, his Creator, Benefactor, and as his Governor and Lawgiver. By his "iniquities" and his "secret sins," he is represented as a transgressor of that law which is "holy, just, and good." He has resisted his authority, despised his counsels, and followed the devices of his own corrupt heart. Having acted thus, he is exposed to the Divine displeasure, and to the penalty denounced against rebellious men. "For we are consumed," etc., v. 7.

For a proof of man's need of mercy, see Isa. 1, former part; Rom. 8 : 10, etc.; Gal. 3 : 10.

Man is guilty, and needs pardon; condemned, and needs justification; impure, and needs righteousness and holiness; a wanderer, an outcast, and needs reconciliation and adoption; an heir of wrath, exposed to perdition, and needs salvation, and a title to heaven.

These things he cannot procure for himself, for he has no merit; nor by the intervention of any human being, for "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."—View man

(2.) *As frail and mortal.* This is the state of all, and it is the fruit of sin. Look at thy frail, decaying body; how it sickens and

languishes: how it is pained and agonized; how its bloom and its strength depart; how it withers and dies, and "says to corruption, thou art my father, and to the worm," Job 17 : 14— all this has been produced by sin. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin," etc. Rom. 5 : 12.

Most affecting representations of man's frailty and morality are given by Moses in the context.

As destined to return to dust, v. 5, and Eccle. 12 : 7.

His life is *a dying one*, v. 5. "Thou carriest them away as with a flood," ever gliding down the stream of time into the ocean of eternity; the flood of mortality is ever flowing, and he is carried away with it— carried with it violently, irresistibly. Time passes unobserved by him (they are as a sleep, v. 5), as it does with persons asleep, and dreaming of happiness and security, and when it is over, it is as nothing.

His life is *short and transient*, v. 5, 6, 10. He resembles the "grass," which in the morning grows up and flourishes in its beautiful greenness, but which in the evening is cut down, and instantly withers, changes its color, and loses all its beauty. So it will be with man. "Thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away."

Come, then, O man, and behold thy picture! Thou art a sinner, and perdition is thy prospect, the blackness of darkness forever. Thou art "like grass." This is the emblem of thy life and of all thy works! "Grass!" Not the strong and enduring tree of the forest; not even the shrub, but "grass," which flourishes in the morning, etc. "All the glory of man," all that decorates and adorns his life, all that is beauty to the eye, or gives pleasure to the senses, is still more frail; it endures not the life of the short-lived plant, which arrays itself in its beauty. "The grass withereth," etc. How short-lived the glory of thy physical nature! Youth, beauty, strength, the flow of feeling, and the rush of energy, are fast failing thee; the wind of sickness, or care, or toil, or age, will pass over them, and they will be entirely gone. A frost shall lay the flower in the dust, or a blight leave its withered remains to shiver on the stem.

Observe the flowers which remind us most of the bloom of Eden, and which shed their delightful fragrance on the path of life. The happy social hearth; the friendships founded on virtue; the hallowed domestic relation; the fellowship of saints. Separation by death changes the scene; strangeness and solitude succeed; the place of many know them no more. Behold the furrowed turf around you. It is heaved above its natural surface, and it covers the generations of short-lived men. Like the herbage of the season, life and death have trodden in each other's footsteps, and the career of each goes on. Death is at the heels of life, cutting down its present plans, and sternly trampling into dust its constant but vain creations. "All flesh is grass."

From these two statements, man a sinner, frail and dying, it is evident that he needs mercy—mercy to restore his soul to the favor of God, and his body from the effects of mortality, and to give it to an endless glorious life.

THAT DIVINE MERCY HAS BEEN MANIFESTED, AND IS ADAPTED TO THE NEEDS OF SINNERS.

"What must we do to be saved?" To this question human reason has never succeeded in rendering a satisfactory answer. It has failed in every attempt to form a religious system that shall meet the case, and satisfy the conscience of man. It has been made amid the untutored simplicity of nature, and amid the refinement of cultivated society. The savage has paused amid his wild pursuits, to ponder his relation to the mighty spirit, and the philosopher, in his profound inquiries into the moral laws of the universe, has cast his line into "the deep profound," that lies in half-unveiled obscurity between earth and heaven. But both the attempts have failed. The only result has been, that the savage has deified an impersonation of his own passions, and the philosopher has been compelled to give in to the popular creed, absurd and unsatisfying as he may think it to be, or to adopt the dreary alternative of unmitigated and uninquiring atheism.——"The world by wisdom knew not God."

However, we are not left to the futility of vain man. "We have a more sure word of prophecy," etc. 2 Pet. 1 : 19. "God, who at sundry times," etc. Heb. 1 : 1-3. He is called "the Mercy promised to the Fathers," Luke 1 : 72; and the fathers derived their salvation and felicity through him, as by faith they saw his salvation symbolized in every shadow and type, and exhibited in every prediction. He was the "light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel." Hence, Simeon sang in the temple, as he clasped the Redeemer in his arms:

"Now I can leave this world (he cried),
Behold thy servant dies;
I've seen thy great salvation, Lord,
And close my peaceful eyes.

"This is the light prepared to shine
Upon the Gentile lands;
Thine Israel's glory and their hope,
To break their slavish bands."

1st. Mercy is a *very comprehensive term*, implying the pity, compassion, love, and favor of God to fallen and ruined man. It implies all that pity, grace, and help, which the circumstances of ruined man require. Mercy is the glorious attribute of Jehovah, Ex. 33 : 19; 34 : 6, 7.

(2.) *This mercy flows to man through the mediation of Christ.* See John 3 : 16. Through the mediation of Christ, the Divine substitute for sinners, and who "died the just for the unjust to bring them to God," "bearing their iniquities in his own body on the tree," a way was opened for the exercise of mercy to guilty rebels, consistent with the honor of the Divine law, and all the perfections of Deity; for now "God is just in justifying the ungodly who believe in Jesus," in virtue of whose atoning sacrifice he has promised to be "merciful to their unrighteousness," etc. Heb. 8 : 12.

(3.) This mercy, it will be seen, is adapted to the circumstances of the sinner. Here is an atonement for his guilt, pardon for his sins, purity and righteousness for his vileness—here is adoption for the outcast. And for the *frail and dying*, Christ is the "resurrection and the life," and shall "change his vile body," etc.

(4.) This mercy is available, and perfectly free and gratuitous.

III. THE APPLICATION FOR DIVINE MERCY.

The Psalmist prayed for it, "O satisfy me early with thy mercy." Invoking God for this mercy implies,

1st. *A conviction that it is necessary.* The applicant feels himself to be a lost sinner—one ready to perish. Thoughts of death impress his mind, and he feels he cannot die happily, and pass into eternity with triumph without Divine mercy. Therefore "satisfy me early," etc.

(2.) It is the application of believing prayer. He does not trust in himself. He perceives the adaptation of the Redeemer's sacrifice to his state, and earnestly prays God to manifest his mercy to him through the finished work of Christ. "O satisfy," etc., to pardon my sins—to justify, and to save to the uttermost.

(3.) It is an application *for its immediate manifestation.* "Satisfy us early." Not at some future time, but now, while we have life, and health, and mental vigor—and while conviction of its importance and necessity is so strong. Sickness may prevent the calm exercise of our rational powers—sin and earthly cares may divert our attention from it, and harden the heart, and death may place Divine mercy beyond our reach. "O satisfy us early," before the harvest is past, etc.

Let the *young* utter this prayer. You are like the morning grass, or flower; in the bloom, beauty, and vigor of youth. All will soon fade, and be cut down. "All flesh is grass."

Let the *middle-aged* utter this prayer. The freshness of the morning flower is partly gone. Physical decay and decrepitude indicate that you "fade like a leaf." The hand of death will soon cut you down. "O satisfy us early."

Let the *aged* adopt this prayer. It is winter with you. The beauty and vigor of the flower are over. See Eccle. 12. "What thou doest, do quickly."

Lastly. DIVINE MERCY WILL SATISFY AND PRODUCE JOY AND GLADNESS. "That we may rejoice," etc. Observe,

(1.) *It does that which nothing else can.* To produce satisfaction, joy, and gladness, all human expedients fail. Can the world, wealth, carnal pleasures, friends, associates, do this? Impossible. That which is finite cannot satisfy an immortal spirit.

(2.) Because Divine mercy *gives the assurance of salvation*, and this produces joy. See Acts 16 : 34, and other texts.

(3.) *Because it is immutable.* Not like earthly vanities, which are like grass. See 1 Pet. 1 : 24, 25.

(4.) *Because it sweetens all the bitters of life.* Afflictions, conflict, death, etc.

(5.) *Because it inspires with the hope of eternal life.* "Rejoicing in hope of the glory of God."

APPLICATION.

- (1.) Be thankful for Divine mercy.
 - (2.) How insensible are men to their best interests! The mercy of God would cause them to "rejoice, and be glad all their days," but they prefer "vanity and vexation of spirit."
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II.—SEASONABLE SEEKING AFTER GOD.

"Seek the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near."—ISA. 55: 6.

THERE is nothing that so much concerns the children of men as an interest in the favor of Almighty God, whose "favor is life, and whose loving-kindness is better than life," and whose displeasure includes all the horrors of eternal death. — But, alas! if we look abroad into the world, and observe the conduct of mankind, we shall find them pursuing empty vanities and fleeting shadows—the mere delusive appearances of what they fondly call and estimate as happiness. Some are contriving how they may pass away their days in luxury and vain amusements; and the only use which they make of their time is to study how they may lavish it away in the most impertinent and unprofitable manner. Others are endeavoring to climb the steep ascent of worldly honor and grandeur, and others are intoxicated with an intense desire to accumulate what the world calls wealth. — But where is he who inquires, "Where is God, my Maker?" — The majority of mankind are inquiring where is wealth—profit—preferment—mirth, etc. — Life, however, will soon be done; all will soon enter upon an eternal scene; the value or worthlessness of all human pursuits will be known then. — It is well for us that the Gospel is proclaimed, that the invitations of Mercy are given repeatedly, that we may secure our present and eternal happiness. See verses preceding the text.

The subject of the text is, *Seasonable Seeking after God*; the purport of the exhortation is equivalent to that which, in New Testament language, is called "repentance towards God, and faith," etc.

I. SEEKING GOD IMPLIES THAT MANKIND HAVE LOST HIM.

1. *This loss is caused by sin.* "Your iniquities have separated," etc. Isa. 59: 2; 58: 6. Sin has offended the Divine Lawgiver. Hence there is a moral distance between him and us, as between two friends who have disagreed. God is holy, and utterly opposed to all sin. As, therefore, we have trampled upon his law and contemned his authority, the "face of the Lord is against them that do evil." He is "angry with the wicked every day." Both "them and their ways doth his soul hate," and he has shown his displeasure in threatenings and in judgments. Witness the deluge—Sodom, etc.—Korah, Nathan, etc.—many of the Israelites, etc. Witness the lightnings and thunderings of Sinai.

"Cursed is every one," etc. Gal. 3 : 10.——While man was holy, he had communion with him; but can the infinitely Pure One commune with an unholy transgressor? No. He is an alien, a stranger, far off by wicked works.——Like the Prodigal, he has wandered from his father's house, etc. Lost the Divine friendship—his care—his love—his image.

2. This loss is *the precursor of infinite and eternal loss*. The sinner is not only "without God, and without hope" in this world, but if he remain incorrigible, that calamity will be perpetuated forever. An alien forever; without God forever; the victim of his anger forever; no joy, no bliss, no hope forever.

3. *This loss, therefore, is immense*. Who can fully estimate it? A loss sustained by the *soul*; the loss of *God*; the loss of *heaven*, etc. What is the loss of worldly honor, rank, or station, compared with this? What the loss of a fortune, estates, a kingdom, or crown, etc.

4. It is *a loss which no human resources can repair*. Moral virtues, as they are termed, alms, penance, vows, pilgrimages, sacrifices, the most costly offerings, avail not here. They cannot restore to the soul the favor of God. Vain the gold of Sheba, the topaz of Ethiopia, the pearls of Ormus, the most costly gems, to procure salvation! "Will the Lord be pleased," etc. Micah 6 : 6, 7. The Jews sought Divine acceptance through the law, but failed. Rom. 9 : 31, 32.

II. THAT A WAY HAS BEEN DEVISED BY WHICH THE DIVINE FAVOR MAY BE REGAINED.

That way is through the mediation of the Son of God. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself," 2 Cor. 5 : 19. He has "so loved the world," etc. John 3 : 16. He hath set him forth to be "a propitiation," etc. Rom. 3 : 25, etc. We have now "access to God by faith," etc. Rom. 5 : 2; Eph. 2 : 18; 3 : 12. Hence Christ said, "I am the way." "No man can come unto the Father, except by me."——Formerly, the Lord was sought through sacrifices, by the sinful in the age of the patriarchs and prophets. But all those sacrifices were typical of the great One Sacrifice offered up on Mount Calvary. Those harbingers of the cross are now no more. A Divine Victim has bled, and the way of salvation is through Christ. Heb. 7 : 25.——"Seeking the Lord," implies —

III. THE TOTAL RENUNCIATION OF ALL HUMAN METHODS OF SALVATION.

"Man was made upright, but he has sought out many inventions" by which to be saved. He has denied the depravity of his heart, and gloried in his imagined goodness; in order to merit heaven, he has scattered the gifts of his bounty; he has been rigid in the performance of social duties; he has strictly adhered to religious form and ceremonies; he can relate many instances of goodness, indicative that he is more excellent than his neighbor. His honesty, his love of justice, his sobriety, the philanthropy of his heart, are unquestionable.——All this he makes his Saviour. The natural pride of his heart, which grace alone can subdue, prompts him to "go about to establish his own righteousness, not submitting," etc. But all this must be abandoned, and Christ must be all. How did the Apostle Paul act? Mark his lan-

guage: "If any other," etc. Phil. 3: 4-9.—What though you could from this time forth embody in your life all moral excellencies; what though you could collect and include in that exemplification, all the moral virtues that have characterized all those who have lived before you; what though you possessed a world, and unsparingly gave your goods to feed the poor; what though you could breathe a martyr's spirit, and give your body to the flames, all this would be nothing, yea, worse than nothing in the procuration of your salvation: for your sins would be still unatoned for, and you would die without hope. Listen, proud sinner, listen: "Other foundations can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus the Lord." "For there is none other name given," etc. Cast away thy pride, therefore, and go with the simplicity of a little child, and sit at the Redeemer's cross. Acknowledge him, and thou shalt be saved. Isa. 55: 1-3.

IV. SUBMISSION TO THE DIVINELY APPOINTED PLAN OF SALVATION, BY THE USE OF THOSE MEANS SCRIPTURALLY SPECIFIED.

This implies —

1. *A deep conviction of the awful loss sustained.* Lost God. The conviction of the Prodigal when "he came to himself." Luke 15. A feeling that we cannot be happy till we have found him. — A conviction of helplessness combined with that renunciation of self-righteousness previously mentioned. Acts 2: 37.

2. *Diligent inquiry and attention.* "Seeking" implies this. "Where, and by what means can the Lord be found?" "What shall I do to be saved?" The convinced sinner is anxious after salvation. He investigates it by hearing and reading the word of God. He "searches the Scriptures." — Such knowledge is the foundation of true faith. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee," etc.

3. *Faith in Christ and earnest prayer.* The penitent approves of Christ. He beholds him as his atoning sacrifice; he finds him to be just such a Saviour as a guilty and ruined sinner needs. He "calls" upon God through Christ the Mediator: I have sinned, O Jehovah, and thou hast hidden thy face from me. I have lost thy favor, and deserve to be the victim of thy eternal wrath. I come unto thee full of godly sorrow. I abhor myself as in dust and ashes. I renounce all claim to goodness and merit. My righteousness and merit are in Christ. He has lived and died for me. I therefore "call upon thee" from my heart; O hear me for his sake! "God be merciful to me a sinner." "Lord, save, or I perish." — This is the prayer of faith, and it shall succeed; for "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved."

V. SEEKING THE LORD REQUIRES IMMEDIATE ATTENTION.

"While he may be found" — "call upon him while he is near." We are prone to procrastinate, and to say with Felix, "Go thy way," etc. Some say they are too young to seek the Lord, and others are so engrossed with earthly cares that they cannot find time, or they would attend to it. — Thus life is spent in futile resolutions, like the man in the parable who said, "I go, sir, but went not." — Observe,

1st. The Lord may be *more easily found in early life*. — While the heart is tender, and the mind is vigorous. Eccl. 12: 1; Prov. 8: 17. — What bright examples of early piety are given in the sacred oracles! — “Josiah, while he was yet young, began to seek God.” See 2 Chron. 34: 3. But the season of youth is rapidly passing away, and then those facilities for seeking God will in a measure be gone. — He may be found, and he is near.

2d. *Under the preaching of the Gospel*. If you sit under it, then before “your eyes Jesus Christ is evidently set forth, crucified among you.” Gal. 3: 1. He is preached to you as the way, the truth, and the life. By hearing his Gospel, by believing in him, for “faith cometh by hearing,” you may be saved. — But if you continue careless and indifferent, your heart may become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin; the promises, invitations, and overtures of the Gospel will be powerless. Instead of being a “savor of life unto life,” the Gospel will become a “savor of death unto death.”

3d. When *under conviction produced by the Spirit of God*, the Lord may be readily sought and found. Then he comes near indeed. He touches the conscience. He knocks at the heart. — But you may stifle these convictions, and promise yourself a more propitious season for following them — a season, alas! that may never arrive! “Boast not thyself of to-morrow,” etc.

4th. The privilege of seeking the Lord is *limited to this present life*. At death all opportunity will cease. The Gospel to us will be preached no more. The Spirit will strive no more. Ministers and friends will beseech us no more. “As the tree falleth, so it lies.” “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still.”

III.—THE SLEEPER AROUSED.

“What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise and call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.” — JONAH 1: 6.

THE circumstances connected with these words are very interesting. Jonah rejected the commission of God to preach repentance to the Ninevites. He fled from the presence of the Lord, v. 3. A terrible storm arose, and placed the lives of the mariners in jeopardy, v. 4. Their hearts failed them; they apprehended nothing less than shipwreck. But in the midst of danger so appalling, Jonah was fast asleep, v. 5. The text is the address of the captain to the disobedient prophet. “What meanest thou,” etc. — It is an awful thing to disobey the voice of the Lord. No sinner can elude his searching eye. “Be sure your sin will find you out.” The judgments of heaven are often employed to alarm and convert the sinner. — The state of Jonah, and the address of the captain, may fitly represent the sinner’s carelessness and indifference to Divine things in the midst of the most imminent peril, and also the loud and earnest call of the Gospel, to “arise and call upon God” for mercy. “Awake, thou that sleepest,” etc. Eph. 5: 14.

I. THE STATE OF THE SINNER ILLUSTRATED BY THAT OF JONAH. "O sleeper."

What is the character of a sinner, but that of a sleeper? That sleep is induced by sin, which has blinded his mind to spiritual things, turned his affections from God to the creature, perverted his judgment, and defiled his affections. While "God is not in all his thoughts," he sleeps on the lap of sensual indulgence, and drowns his senses by the cup of intoxication, and continued draughts of worldly pleasure. A "lover of pleasure more than of God."

This character or state therefore implies,

1st. *Insensibility.* A person asleep is generally insensible to everything around him. Nocturnal marauders may enter his house — conflagration may seize it — dangers the most alarming may be impending, and he not know it. Announce to the sleeper the most interesting intelligence — try to charm him with the softest music — he hears it not; he is fast locked in the embraces of sleep. — And such is thy state, O sinner. Thou art condemned, under the curse of the law, and yet art insensible of thy state. Sinai against thee emits its lightning's flash, and peals forth its awful thunders, but they affect thee not. Others quail under them; (Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake"), and cry, "What must we do to be saved?" but the law has no terrors for thee. Thou seest not — thou hearest not. This is thy character: "Having the understanding darkened," etc. Eph. 4 : 18.

2d. *Delusion.* During sleep, dreams are often delusive. Vagaries, phantoms, rapidly flit across the mind and leave no impression. Sometimes, however, the vision is enchanting, and the impression left is strong. But the opening of the eyes, and a little reflection, prove those golden dreams to be delusion. [See this idea beautifully illustrated in Isa. 29 : 8.] So it is with the sinner. He calls evil good, bitter sweet, darkness light. Pleasure is his all. Wealth is his God. Sensual gratification, conviviality, are his chief good. What a delusion! For this, did thy Creator form thee? Did he create thy intellectual faculties to be thus prostrated at the shrine of sin? Man, thou art deluded. Earthly vanities cannot satisfy thy soul — they cannot smooth for thee the pillow of death. A little longer, and then, O sleeper, death will take the veil from thine eyes, and all the past will appear to thee as a delusion.

3d. *Danger.* To sleep in some situations would be perilous. For a sentinel to fall asleep at his post would be hazardous. A drunkard may fall asleep, and open his eyes no more. How many have lain down at night, and disease, before morning, has forever closed their eyes! — And is not spiritual sleep a state of danger? While thou art careless and indifferent, time is advancing, thy body is decaying, thy faculties are wasting, sin is withering thee, death is coming. And what if it come while thou art asleep? Sins unforgiven, guilt not removed — no title to heaven — thy soul not saved! "What meanest thou," etc. "The wages of sin is death." "The end of these things is death."

II. THE EXPOSTULATION. "What meanest," etc.

1st. *This Expostulation is necessary.* The captain apprised Jonah

of danger. It was an act of humanity. — The sinner must be apprised of his danger, because he is insensible of it, as Jonah was to the storm that was threatening the ship. To warn men, Christ established the Gospel ministry. "Go preach the Gospel to every creature." Acts 26 : 17, 18; Col. 1 : 28.

2d. It is expressive of *anxious solicitude for man's welfare*. The captain of the ship was in the first place anxious for his own safety—next for the crew on board. — The servants of God must *feel* the danger of sinners; they must pant for their deliverance—they must save them "with fear, pulling them from the fire." "Knowing, therefore, the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men." What is profession, preaching, gifts, talents, without "*the heart's desire*." Rom. 10 : 1. All who have been eminent for usefulness have deeply felt, etc.

3d. *It expresses reproof*. "What meanest," etc. The storm is raging—the elements are conspiring, the waves and billows roll and dash against the vessel—we shall shortly be engulfed—we have not long to live—eternity is at hand—and thou art sleeping. O stoic! O man of apathy! what meanest 'hou? Such was the import of the captain's address to Jonah. — And sinners, why are ye so indifferent to danger? How irrational! What madness! "Truly there is but a step betwixt you and death!" — Would a person sleep, if he knew his house was on fire—if he knew his child was at the point of death—if some fell disease had just commenced its ravages upon his frame—without instantly seeking a remedy? Would a man in poverty be indifferent if it was announced to him that his fortune was about to be reversed—that distinguished honors were before him? — What infatuation to be insensible to the greatest of all danger—to be indifferent to substantial happiness, and when a sceptre, a crown, and a kingdom are offered to you! but even then you close your eyes, and stop your ears, and say, "A little more sleep," etc.

4th. *It is expressive of warning*. If thou risest not from thy lurking place, thou wilt perish. — And if sinners repent and believe not, they will be lost. If the Gospel prove not "a savor of life unto life, it will be a savor of death unto death." — Sinners must be warned faithfully, solemnly, earnestly, constantly.

III. THE DUTY ENFORCED. "*Arise, call upon thy God.*"

The Duty implies,

1st. *Serious attention to the expostulation*. The ear must be obtained, and the mind engaged, or no good can be done. Jonah gave attention. The earnestness of the captain excited it.

2d. *Sensibility of danger, and deep anxiety to escape it*. Like the Philippian jailer, convinced and anxious to flee from the wrath to come. Without such conviction, there can be no repentance and faith.

3d. *Repentance and confession of sin*. This was the case with Jonah, v. 12. "Let the wicked forsake his way," etc. Isa. 55 : 7.

4th. *Earnest prayer, or calling upon God in the exercise of faith*. Jonah did this, ch. 2 : 1. He prayed in faith. "Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight, yet I will look again toward thy holy temple," ch. 2 : 4-9. In the temple expiatory sacrifices were offered—sacrifices typical of Christ the great One Sacrifice. His faith rested there, and

brought him to say, "Salvation is of the Lord."——The sinner must look to Christ, the "Hiding-place" from the storms and tempests of wrath. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Lastly. *The result was gracious.* Jonah was pardoned and restored to his duties. So shall the sinner be; pardoned, justified, adopted, and enjoy all the privileges of God's people. He shall arise from his sleep, and serve the Lord in "newness of life," and become a chosen vessel for the Master's service.

IV.—THE GREATNESS OF THE SAVIOUR'S LOVE.

"His great love wherewith he loved us."—Eph. 2 : 4.

THE Bible is replete with interesting subjects; but the most interesting of all is the love of Christ. Therefore it has a prominent place in the sacred oracles. It possesses universal interest—it interests the Church below and the Church above. It is a subject of boundless, and of eternal importance. Paul loved this subject exceedingly. He had felt its power; it filled him with joy and hope, and peace. He was not ashamed of it; he gloried in it, and was willing to suffer martyrdom for it.

The subject of the text is, *The greatness of Divine Love.* The love of Christ passeth knowledge. We cannot reach its sublime heights; we cannot fathom its profound depths; we cannot comprehend its immense breadth, nor know its eternal length. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." However, the Scriptures reveal to us enough for our salvation—enough to give us peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.——The greatness of this love appears,

I. *From its Antiquity.* We need not trace the manifestation of this love to the prophets, and to the patriarchs, and Adam, who received the first promise. This love was in operation "before the foundation of the world." See Prov. 8 : 22; Eph. 1 : 11; 3 : 11; 2 Tim. 1 : 9; Matt. 25 : 34; Eph. 1 : 4. God foresaw my fall, guilt, ruin, and exposure to eternal death, before the world began, and then in his love and pity, contrived for me the stupendous plan of redemption. Amazing love!

II. *From the essential dignity and glory of Christ.* It was not an earthly potentate—not a celestial spirit, not any one of the "principalities and powers," who was commissioned to become our Ransomer. It was "the only begotten Son of God"—the dignified and uncreated Lord of hosts, Jehovah's fellow and equal—the Lord of angels, the God of the universe. See John 1 : 1-3; 17 : 5; Phil. 2 : 5, 6; Heb. 1 : 1-3, etc.

III. *From what he became.* He dismantled himself of his heavenly splendor—he vacated the throne of his glory—he came down

to earth—he was born—he became flesh, John 1 : 14; Phil. 2 : 7, 8; 1 Tim. 3 : 16; Heb. 2 : 14. Thus he became man, and was poor, 2 Cor. 8 : 9. He was despised and rejected of men; he was reviled and persecuted, etc. etc. How great was his love!

IV. *From what he endured.* As a man, from hunger, fatigue—from his agony in the garden, before Herod, Pilate—from the scourging, the crown of thorns that encircled his brow, and from the nails which perforated his hands and feet.—He suffered *civilly*, as a member of society, being falsely accused, and condemned to die as a traitor to his country, and a blasphemer of his God; an insurrectionist and a murderer was preferred before him. He suffered *spiritually*, from the thick volley of fiery darts which were showered upon him—from the sword of inflexible justice which pierced his heart—from the hidings of his Father's countenance. Witness his agony when he said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—Observe,

1st. *This endurance was voluntary.* John 10 : 17, 18.

2d. It was *vicarious, or substitutionary.* See Isa. 53 : 4, 5; Dan. 9 : 24; Rom. 5 : 6-9. His death, therefore, was more than that of a martyr.

V. *From the character of those for whom he suffered and died.* It was for "sinners," Rom. 5 : 8; 1 Tim. 1 : 15; he died for "the unjust," 1 Pet. 3 : 18. "I came not to call the righteous," etc. These were the characters for whom he died! Apostates, rebels, vile and odious before Infinite Purity.—Hence the greatness of Divine love! Who would die for the unworthy, for a thief, a murderer? None. "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die," etc. Rom. 5 : 7.

There have been astounding sacrifices of love, but they have been made for friends or relatives who were dearly loved. Pythias promptly offered to die for Damon. Some of the citizens of Calais offered to redeem that city by the sacrifice of their own lives. A shipwrecked crew, by reason of their scanty stock of provision, found it necessary to throw one overboard. The lot fell upon one who had a family depending upon him. But his younger brother, who was single, offered to die for him. —But Christ died for his enemies.

VI. FROM THE GLORIOUS RESULTS OF HIS SACRIFICE.

The result is a free, complete, and everlasting salvation. A deliverance from sin, guilt, and condemnation, the worst of all evils; from self, the worst of all companions; from death, the most awful of all changes; from Satan, the worst of all enemies; from hell the worst of all prisons; and from wrath, the doom of all sinners.—Here is reconciliation with God—peace of mind, the result of pardon, etc.—all privileges—all promises—a title to heaven—and an "abundant entrance" to glory everlasting.

1st. *Be clothed with humility.* Such great love we have not merited. *Salvation is of grace.* Be thankful.

2d. Study the greatness of Divine love.

3d. What ground for the Christian's joy, and the penitent sinner's hope!

V.—THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE.

“War a good warfare.”—1 TIM. 1: 18.

“THE kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.”—All who have entered the Church of God below; all who have entered the Church triumphant in glory, have been, in this world, the subjects of spiritual conflict. Their character here was that of “soldiers of Christ,” and finally, that of “conquerors” through him. Hence those glorified spirits in heaven, who are now arrayed in “white robes, came out of great tribulation,” etc. Rev. 7: 14. And till “time shall be no longer,” this shall be the case. The saint, from scenes of poverty, sin, temptation, persecution, and death, shall mount up to heaven, and “rest from his labors.” “There the wicked cease from troubling,” etc. —Because the Christian is holy, separate from the world, and aspiring after immortality,—depravity, the world, and Satan are opposed to him. “We must have tribulation.”—Seeing then that we must struggle or perish, must conquer or die, it is our wisest and best course to regard the advice of “Paul the aged” to his son Timothy in the Gospel;—“War a good warfare.”

I.—THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE.

As Christians, we are engaged in a more important conflict than any pertaining to this world. However awfully magnificent earthly armies, their battles, and their victories, may be, yet they are but puerile when compared with the battles and the conquests of the Church of God. “We wrestle not with flesh and blood,” not with mortals like ourselves, but with evil spirits and evil things. Eph. 6: 12. All God’s people are represented as engaged in this warfare. Isa. 40: 2; 1 Cor. 9: 7; 2 Cor. 10: 4; 1 Pet. 2: 11. “Fight the good fight of faith; lay hold on eternal life.”—Observe,

1. That this warfare is *the struggle of Christ against Satan*; holiness against sin; light against darkness; heaven against hell. — God has determined to establish his kingdom in the hearts of his people, and to spread his benevolent reign upon the earth. To this Satan and depraved man are opposed. Hence the warfare—the struggle which must prevail.

2. *That the Christian is a soldier in Christ’s army.* — Once a subject of the Prince of darkness, fighting under his banner against God and his cause. The Spirit irradiated his mind—made him dissatisfied with his alliance to Satan, and when Christ, the captain of salvation, wishing to recruit his army, said to him, “Follow thou me,” he responded, “Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.” Thus he enlisted into the service of Christ, and became “willing in the day of his power.” “He is translated,” etc. Col. 1: 18.

3. *That this warfare implies numerous foes.* These foes are both internal and external.

1. His internal foes are the propensities of his heart naturally depraved. Though these propensities are restrained by Divine grace, yet they struggle incessantly to break loose, and to exercise their destructive power. Hence Christians are called upon to fight against "the lusts which war in their members;" and "to abstain from fleshly lusts," etc. See Rom. 7 : 21. Some may object to the application of these words to the Christian life; but every believer feels their truth. Every day, every hour, he feels the inward struggle.

So darkness struggles with the light,
Till perfect day arise;
Water and fire maintain the fight,
Until the weaker dies.

Thus will the flesh and Spirit strive,
And vex and break my peace;
Till I shall quit this mortal life,
And sin forever cease.*

2. The believer has to contend against the Prince and powers of darkness, Eph. 6 : 12; James 4 : 7. The great design of Satan is *re-possession*. Believers are redeemed captives; and their having been ransomed from his domination by Christ, is galling to him, and therefore he will ever desire to "have them, that he may sift them as wheat."

How formidable are these foes, Satan and his allies! What would become of the saint if unsupported by Divine Love and Omnipotence! He is called Abaddon, in Hebrew; Apollyon, in Greek—that is, destroyer; angel of the bottomless pit; God of this world; an adversary, an accuser, a deceiver, a murderer; Beelzebub, Belial, Dragon, Leviathan, and Lucifer; a Serpent, Satan, tormentor; an adder, a wolf, a lion, and lightning. We are told of the "wiles of the Devil," hiding his designs, and falling upon us when we least expect it. He is *invisible*—his influence is like the nightly pestilence which walks in darkness.—He studies our propensities, and adapts his temptations to them. Though invisible, he is near us. The safety of a nation menaced by an enemy often depends on his being kept at a distance; but the enemy is within our borders, and there is no other resource left but to struggle for our life. He works himself, and he *employs instruments*. His knowledge of evil is derived from the experience of 6000 years.—And what is

* See the inward warfare described in the following experience:

"What a dark atheistical state do I live in! Alas! that this creation should so engross my mind, and the author of it be so slightly and coldly regarded! Amazing patience! he bears with this faithless foolish heart."—"Let me praise God for having turned me from a life of woe to the enjoyment of peace and hope. The work is real. I can no more doubt it than I can doubt my existence. I have had a most blessed view of God and Divine things. I looked forward to complete conformity to him, and my assurance was full; I triumphed, and said with tears, 'Who shall separate me,' etc. This is my bliss, that Christ is all. Upheld by him I smile at death."—HEN. MARTYR.

"Wicked thing trouble me too much. Me want to do good, but me wicked heart can't let me. Suppose me pray, my heart run to my country, from which me was stolen. Sometimes them things one no want to remember come in my heart, and then me can't say no more, but Jesus Christ have mercy upon me! Me afraid me no love Jesus Christ yet. Me want to love and serve him too much; but this bad heart. Me think sometimes me have two hearts: one want to do good, that other always want to do bad. O Jesus, have mercy upon me, poor sinner!"—*A pious Negro.*

worse, he has a *strong party within us*, which he incessantly labors to excite to rebellion.

Sometimes their arrows reach the mark,
My throbbing heart with anguish tear,
Each lights upon a kindred spark,
And finds abundant fuel there.

Come, Lord, and chase the cruel host,
Heal the deep wounds I have received!
Nor let the powers of darkness boast,
That I am felled, and thou art grieved.

How fearful the warfare! But it is consolatory to know that these powers, great as they confessedly are, are limited, controlled, overruled by Jehovah, who will "bruise Satan under our feet shortly."

3. The Christian has to contend against *worldly influence*. In our daily intercourse with the world, we come in contact with elements opposed to the spirituality and happiness of our souls. Its moral atmosphere is inimical to progression in the Divine life. It contains very much to which the words will apply, "Touch not, taste not, handle not." There is the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life;" and God frowns disapprobation on all these. "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" The influence of things around us is to degrade us, to hinder us, to ruin us. "What fellowship," etc. 2 Cor. 6 : 14. Hence Christ said, John 15 : 18, 19 ; 17 : 14, 15.

Think of its fascinating pleasures, devised by carnal men, who have "sought out many inventions," by which to please and seduce the soul.

Think of its secular engagements; when prosperous, the mind may be unduly elated, and become wedded to human pursuits. When they are depressed, the mind may sink down in despair. Hence by the "deceitfulness of riches," and the "cares of the world," many have made shipwreck of their faith. Many strong, many mighty men have been cast down.

Think of its reviling and persecuting spirit. It hates righteousness, and righteous persons. Therefore the object of the Christian's warfare is "to keep himself unspotted from the world."

4. The Christian soldier has to contend with numerous discouragements peculiar to his spiritual warfare. The sun does not always shine upon him. He sometimes passes through "much tribulation," arising from adversity — afflictions — and bereavements. By the enemy sometimes overcome, or repulsed. He is often "faint, yet pursuing." Clouds sometimes are upon the Church—the work of God makes little progress — the minister exclaims, "I have labored in vain," etc. — But the soldier of Christ must "be steadfast, immovable," etc.

II. THE EXCELLENCY OF THIS WARFARE: "War a good warfare."
It is "good,"

1. Because its object is to *destroy that which is evil, and promote that which is good*. Its design is like that of the Redeemer's: "He was manifested to destroy the works of the Devil." This world has long been under the "Prince of the power of the air." Christ, by the dispensation of his grace, and the instrumentality of his faithful soldiers,

will rescue it from his desolating sway, and make it break forth into singing, and blossom as the rose. — The design of the Christian's struggle is, through the grace of God, to oppose and overcome that which threatens to involve the soul in guilt and ruin. Its great aim is that the work of grace may prosper in the soul; that, notwithstanding temptation, tribulation, and other opposing influences, the work of holiness may advance, and the soul enjoy more spirituality, and brighter anticipations of heaven. Its great design is "to save a soul," yea, multitudes of souls "from death." — Its object, therefore, is sublimely good. Earthly warfares produce bloodshed, devastation, and ruin. They are like Ezekiel's roll, full of lamentation, mourning, and woe, both within and without.

2. *Because good armor and protection are provided.* In ordinary warfare good armor is of great importance. God has provided the necessary weapons, and of the right temper. See Eph. 6 : 13. Let Divine truth, with its doctrines of grace and immortality, be a "girdle" to strengthen you. Let the Saviour's "righteousness" be the "breast-plate" to defend your precious souls, for it is impenetrable. — Let the "Gospel of peace," amid the rugged and thorny paths of the wilderness, be as shoes to your feet, to enable you to trample upon the lion and the adder, the young lion and the dragon. Let "faith" be your "shield" wherewith, etc. — Let "salvation," the *hope* of eternal life, be your "helmet." And take, and do battle with "the sword of the Spirit," etc. Praying always, "with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit," etc. — These weapons have been tried — proved — have never failed. They are infallible.

3. It is a warfare *under a good Commander.* It is very important for an army to have a skilful and heroic general. — The King eternal, etc., is the Commander of the hosts of Israel. To this office he was Divinely appointed; "Behold I have ~~given~~," etc. Isa. 55 : 4; 42 : 1-4. "Gird thy," etc. Ps. 14 : 3, etc. — Think of his qualifications — his wisdom — his power — his love. He knows the number, the power, the cunning, and the wiles of our enemies, and he has infinite power to overcome them. What has he done? Look at his encounter with the Prince of darkness in the wilderness — at his contests with his emissaries, the Pharisees, and Jewish priests of old — at his struggle so dark and fearful in the garden — and then at his triumphant battle on the cross. Then he "spoiled principalities and powers — led captivity captive," etc. This Divine Captain never lost a battle. He never had to say, with a great General, "the battle is fought, but the victory is lost." — Such a Commander has the Christian. What was Samson, Gideon, Joshua, David, Alexander, Julius Cæsar, or any other mighty warrior, compared with Christ, our Leader. This is he who cuts in pieces the gates of brass, and breaks asunder the bars of iron, that hath the keys, etc.; that slew Rahab and wounded the Dragon, who is terrible to the kings of the earth, and will come upon Princes as upon mortar. This is he that is the terror of devils, the dread of mortals, who will make other captains tremble, and cry out to the rocks and the mountains to hide them in the day of his wrath. — [2 Kings 6 : 13-17.]

4. *Because it will issue in complete and eternal triumph — unspeakable and ever-during happiness and glory.* — It is not the will of the Divine Captain that any of his soldiers should perish — but conquer. To this

end he cheers them—assists them—guards them. “He teaches their hands to war,” etc. “Fear not, for I am with thee,” etc. “My grace,” etc. His covenant engagements—the existence of his grace in their hearts—their mystical union with him—his infinite and immutable love for them all—all declare that they shall certainly triumph—that “having loved his own, he will love them to the end.” “Having begun a good work,” etc. See Rom 8: 33–39. — And this victory shall be followed by exalted honor. See Rev. 2: 7, 11, 17, 27–29; 3: 5, 12, 21. What splendid imagery is here! Soldiers of the cross, how bright your honors, how green, how verdant your crown! Yes, Christian warrior, though despised here, you are then to be acknowledged—then to be crowned!

Soldier, rise, — the war is done,
Lo the host of hell are flying,
’Twas thy Lord the battle won;
Jesus vanquished them by dying.
Take thy crown — before thee lies
All the conquered land of glory:

Hark! — what songs of rapture rise,
These proclaim the victor’s story;
Soldier, lay thy weapons down,
Quit the sword and take the crown;
Triumph! all thy foes are banished,
Death is slain, and earth is vanishes:

III. THE CLAIMS OF THIS WARFARE UPON THE CHRISTIAN. “War,” etc. The word “good” may not only describe the excellency of the warfare, but also point out the mode of execution. — To war a good warfare, the Christian

1. *Must be sensible of his own incompetence.* — These foes are mighty, cunning, etc. He is weak. They are mightier than he, and unless he have help from above, he must perish,

An arm of flesh must fail,
In such a strife as this:
He only can prevail, whose arm immortal is;
’Tis heaven itself the strength must yield;
And weapons fit for such a field.

And heaven supplies them too;
The Lord who never faints
Is greater than the foe, and he is with his saints.
Thus armed they venture to the fight;
Thus armed they put their foes to flight.

2. *Must understand the character of his enemies.* He must not be “ignorant of Satan’s devices”—he must understand himself—his besetting sins, and the evil propensities of his heart.

3. He must *wear the Christian soldier’s habiliments*—use his weapons, and be valiant in the fight. Armor is of no avail unless it be used. The application of the Gospel is that which proves our security. — Use it in afflictions, in persecution, in the hour of temptation; under worldly fascinations, and in trials. — Some of God’s people, through neglecting their armor, have been foiled in the day of battle; of this there are many affecting examples. Always keep this armor bright and ready for action; it must not rust for want of using.

4. Have *unceasing confidence* in the skill and power of his General.

5. That he *battle with his foes* whenever they oppose him. — To be a soldier is not merely to be opposed or tempted, but to make resistance, and not merely to make resistance, but to resist successfully, and not only so, but to resist to the end of life. “Blessed is that man that,” etc. James 1: 12.

APPLICATION.

- 1st. Who is on the Lord's side? Who?
 - 2d. Some were once *soldiers* of the cross, but now are deserters.
 - 3d. All enemies must perish. "Woe to him that striveth," etc.
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VI.—PRAYER FOR DELIVERANCE FROM VANITY.

"Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way."
—Ps. 119: 37.

THE conversation of the Christian is in heaven. By profession, by renovating grace, by separation from the world, he is a traveller to the Zion above.—But he is not perfect, he does not always press forward. There are influences within him and around him which sometimes impede his progress. The "vanities" of earth sometimes attract his attention, and solicit his participation. — It is then the conflict begins, and then he prays, "Turn away mine eyes," etc. The Christian is not invulnerable to these attacks. Frequently they are occasioned by the want of spirituality, and of intercourse with God. Hence it is necessary to pray. "Quicken thou me in thy way."

I. THE EVIL FROM WHICH THE PSALMIST PRAYED TO BE DELIVERED. "Vanity."

The word vanity refers to that which is *unprofitable*, or without fruit. "Vanity of," etc.—It signifies *empty*, without any substance. "Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain." "Surely every man walketh in a vain show." Job calls the time of his affliction, "months of vanity," i. e., empty of solid joy, peace, or comfort. Job 7: 3. Man, as to his continuance on earth, is like vanity, a vapor, a breath. Ps. 39: 5.—It is applied to the possessions of life. "Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished." Prov. 13: 11. — "The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is vanity." Prov. 21: 6. And Christ says, "What shall it profit," etc.—The text means that which is empty, unsatisfying, wicked, yielding nothing but "vexation of spirit." — Observe,

1. That beholding vanity, or delight in the trifles of earth arises *from a depraved heart*. "He feedeth on ashes, a deceived heart," etc. Isa. 44: 20. "Lo, this have I found out," etc. Eccle. 7: 29.

2. The word vanity will apply to *sin*. It is unproductive of any comfort. It promises much, but how does it perform? "What fruit had you, etc.

☞ But sin exhibits itself in various ways, it assumes different forms—but in all its representations it is vanity. Consider some of these:—

1st. *Worldly pursuits are characterized by vanity*, that is, when they wholly absorb the mind; when they command all the time, talent, and

attention of a person — when through them the soul is neglected — no time for God — none for his cause.

2d. *The accumulation of riches.* “He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase.” Those who have had much wealth have had less satisfaction, and more vexation than those who have had little. Indulgence increases desire, and diminishes enjoyment. Hence if the whole world could be possessed, it would render the desire the greater, and the enjoyment the less. Alexander the Great sat down and wept, because there were no more worlds to conquer. See 1 Tim. 6 : 9, etc.

3d. *The love of honor and power.* All love these. Even in ordinary life men think highly of themselves, love to be official — to be praised. What is the glory of statesmanship? — the royalty of kings? — their pageantry and pomp are all shadowy. What the prowess and military talent of conquerors? “One murder makes a villain,” etc. “Scatter the people that delight in war!”

4th. *Sensual indulgence.* “The works of the flesh are manifest.” Gal. 5 : 19-21. Meats and drinks — raiment — intemperance. An inordinate love of these is vanity.

5th. *Worldly amusements. Recreation necessary.* Must be of that kind which will maintain a good conscience. — What are theatrical performances but vain and sinful? So far from being promotive of virtue, they are one of the most successful engines of vice that Satan ever invented. Plato banished them from his commonwealth. Xenophon commended the Persians for not allowing their youth to attend them. Seneca complained that by the stage vice made an insensible approach, and stole on the people in the disguise of pleasure. Tacitus says that the German ladies preserved their honor by having no play-houses among them.

The ball-room—games—diversions, and horse-racing. All these are vanity.

That these things are unsatisfying will appear,

1st. *From Scripture in general and from individual characters.* How the Bible represents the world in its proper light — a wicked world — full of vain men — and full of vanity! Note,

(1.) The first witness is *David*, the king of Israel.

(2.) *Solomon*, Eccle. 1 : 13 ; 2 : 1, etc. When kings, amid their splendor and royalty, so represent the matter, it ought deeply to impress our minds.

(3.) *Jesus Christ.* He knew the world, and prayed that his disciples might be kept from the evil of it.

2d. From the statements of those who have loved vanity, and been disappointed.

Abderaman, caliph of Cordova, after his death this writing was found: “Fifty years are elapsed since I became caliph. I have possessed riches, honors, pleasures, friends, everything that man can desire in this world. I have reckoned up the days in which I could say that I was really happy, and they amount to *fourteen*.”

Saladin the Great, after he had subdued Egypt, passed the Euphrates,

retaken Jerusalem, and performed other great exploits, just before he died, called the herald who had carried his banner before him in all his battles, and commanded him to fasten to the top of a lance the shroud in which he was soon to be buried. "Go!" said he, "carry the lance, unfurl the banner, and, while you lift it up, proclaim, 'This is all that remains of the glory of Saladin the Great!'"

A certain nobleman, during his life, said to the world, "Thou art my god." But in death it forsook him. Listen to what he said before he died:

"I have run the silly rounds of business and pleasure, and have done with them all. I have done with all the pleasures of the world, and therefore know their futility, and do not regret their loss! I appraise them at their real value, which is in truth very low, whereas, those who have not experienced always overrate them. They only see the gay outside, and are dazzled with their glare. But I have been behind the scenes. I have seen all the coarse pulleys and dirty ropes which exhibit and move the gaudy machines; and I have seen and smelt the tallow candles which illumine the whole decoration to the astonishment and admiration of an ignorant audience. When I reflect back upon what I have seen, what I have heard, and what I have done, I can hardly persuade myself that all that frivolous hurry and bustle, and pleasure of the world, had any reality; but I look upon all that has passed as one of those romantic dreams which opium commonly occasions, and I do by no means desire to repeat the nauseous dose, for the sake of the fugitive dream. Shall I tell you that I bear this melancholy situation with that meritorious constancy and resignation which most people boast of? No; for I really cannot help it. I bear it because I must bear it. I think of nothing but killing time, now that he is become mine enemy. It is my resolution to sleep in the carriage during the remainder of the journey."

3d. That they are vanity appears from *the nature of the soul*. That which is immaterial cannot be satisfied with that which is material. Even sinners find, from the boundless desires of the soul, the emptiness of earthly pursuits. Nothing but eternity can satisfy the soul.

4th. They are proved to be vanity in the hour of death. What comfort can they give? None.

5th. They are mean when compared with eternal realities.

II. A RECOGNITION OF THE NECESSITY OF DIVINE POWER TO DIVERT THE MIND FROM VANITY, AND TO DIRECT IT TO THE PURSUIT OF SUBSTANTIAL HAPPINESS.

This implies,

1st. *That the pleasures of the world are insinuating* — that they dazzle — entrance — that their power and enticements are felt to be strong.

2d. An acknowledgment of *helplessness*. I cannot resist their power — the torrent is too strong — the voice of the charmer is too sweet.

3d. *Believing prayer*. Application to God for deliverance from vanity.

 God can do it.

4. *By enlightenment* — showing the vanity of the world — can unmask it.

By causing *hatred to vanity*.

By directing the mind to that which is *substantial*.

By *quickening* it in the way to heaven.

APPLICATION.

1st. The cause of spiritual declension, and the reason why the progress of Christianity on the earth is so slow. It is the influence of the world.

2d. Let the multitudes who are bending at the shrine of pleasure, excite our compassion.

3d. Christians will soon realize that which is eternally substantial.

VII.—LOVE TO GOD WANTING.

“But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.” — JOHN 5 : 42.

SUCH was the solemn intimation of Christ to the Jews. They were opposed to his mission; they hated his doctrine and his precepts. The cause of that disaffection was the want of Divine love in their hearts. — Before any one can love God sincerely, his heart must be renewed.

I. WHAT IS IT TO HAVE THE LOVE OF GOD IN THE SOUL?

1st. *Negatively*,

(1.) It is different from mere *natural love*; the love of our kind, as parents and children, brothers and sisters. — Some are more naturally affectionate than others.

(2.) It is different from mere *habitual love*, the result of training, education, parental inculcation.

(3.) It is different from mere human friendship. There may be much kindness in the heart towards particular friends, a disposition to help, etc., and yet the love of God not exist in the heart.

2d. *Positively*, This implies,

(1.) *Spiritual enlightenment* to discover the glory and grace of the Redeemer. The Jews shut their eyes and hardened their hearts against this, as the context shows.

(2.) *A participation in the effects of the Redeemer's sacrifice*. By faith he has received absolution of sin—deliverance from guilt and condemnation—adoption into his family, and an interest in all the privileges of the Church. This is the foundation of love to God.

(3.) *Actual love to Christ*. Much has been done for him, and therefore he loves. Loves Christ as his prophet, for his enlightenment; as his priest, for his atonement; as his best friend, as his

Almighty Saviour. See this operation described, Rom. 5 : 1-5; 1 John 4 : 19.

His love to Christ is proved,

By loving the brotherhood—by loving his cause, and by efforts to extend it—by longing and praying for the salvation of mankind.

II. MULTITUDES IN THE WORLD HAVE NOT THIS LOVE IN THEM. "I know you," etc.

1st. *Such were the Jews.* They pretended much love for God, and for his law, but they rejected his Son, whom he sent to be the Saviour of the world, v. 38, 43-47.

2d. Such is the case with *all the unregenerated.*

3d. *The merely moral person.* That is the truest and most acceptable morality that has love to Christ for its source.

"Talk they of morals? O thou bleeding Lamb,
The grand morality is love of thee!"

4th. *The mere professor.* He talks much—he avows much—he boasts of his philanthropy—he may have commanding talents—but he has not the root of the matter within him—no genuine love.

Had I the tongues of Greeks and Jews,
And nobler speech than angels use,
If love be absent, I am found
Like tinkling brass, an empty sound.

Were I inspired to preach and tell
All that is done in heaven and hell,
Or could my faith the world remove,
Still I am nothing without love.

5th. *The hypocritical.* They pretend to love Christ, but it is to be feared that many are mere dissemblers, having some mercenary end to gain by their apparent devotion—"But I know you," etc. Yes, he knows the mere pretender—the hypocrite, etc. He is the "Searcher of all hearts."

III. THE DANGER OF SUCH A STATE.

1st. The want of this principle implies that *the heart is pregnant with evil of an opposite character.* Hatred of God—of his truth, cause, people.

2d. The want of it *involves great loss.* Love casteth out fear—produces joy in every situation—pleasure in the performance of spiritual duties, etc. All these are lost.

3d. *Evinces black ingratitude.* A contempt of all that the love of God has done to make us happy.

4th. Will subject to *final and everlasting exclusion from the Divine favor.* 1 Cor. 16 : 22.

APPLICATION.

1. Reflect on your conduct.

2. Pray for Divine influence to enlighten—to change—to lead to Christ.

VIII. — CHRIST A SHEPHERD.

A METAPHORICAL SKETCH.

"I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."—
JOHN 10 : 11.

I. A SHEPHERD is chosen and appointed to take care of the Sheep, having suitable qualifications for his engagement.

Jesus Christ is chosen and appointed by Jehovah to take the charge and care of the Church, and he possesses pre-eminent qualifications for the proper discharge of his office. John 6 : 27 ; 8 : 42 ; 10 : 14, 16-18.

II. A Shepherd knows his Sheep; he knows their number, and their character; he marks them, in order to distinguish them from others.

"I know my Sheep," says Christ, "and am known of mine." He specially regards every saint. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous." He knows their wants, their infirmities, their trials, and all they do for his Name's sake. Christ has set his *mark* upon them, even his own image or likeness to himself. That mark is *holiness, meekness, obedience*, by which they are distinguished from the world. See Rev. 7 : 3, 4 ; Ezek. 9 : 4. They have this seal or mark upon them, 1. for distinction; 2. secrecy; 3. security.

III. A Shepherd feeds his Sheep; he leads them to green pastures, and springs of water. Ezek. 24 : 2. "Should not the Shepherds feed the flock?" He prevents them from feeding in unwholesome pastures.

Christ feeds his flock like a Shepherd. Isa. 40 : 11 ; Ps. 23 : 1, 2 ; John 10 : 3. His great care is to place them in good and rich pastures, and to lead them by the still waters, Isa. 49 : 10 ; Jer. 3 : 15. The chief Shepherd, in his word, warns his Sheep against unwholesome pastures; commands them to avoid and detest all pernicious and evil doctrine; not to give ear to false teachers, hirelings, etc.

IV. A Shepherd provides a fold for his Sheep, where he securely keeps them; he suffers them not to stray abroad, lest they should be lost.

The Church militant is the Redeemer's fold; there he places his chosen for their better security, for their happiness, and for his own glory. Acts 2 : 47 ; Eph. 3 : 21. There they assemble, and Christ the great Shepherd is in the midst of them to advise and comfort them. Heb. 10 : 25.

V. A Shepherd defends his flock against ravenous animals, as the dog, fox, wolf; and sometimes ventures his life to preserve them.

Christ laid down his life for his Sheep. He endured unparalleled sufferings and miseries for their sakes. He encountered in battle the

most bitter foes, who sought to devour his flock, to frustrate the plan of redemption, and to rob Jehovah of his glory. "No weapon formed against his Sheep shall prosper," Isa. 54 : 17.

VI. The Shepherd watches over his Sheep, on account of the dangers to which they are exposed. Luke 2 : 18.

Jesus, the Shepherd, constantly watches over his people; his eye is always upon his flock. See Isa. 27 : 3. In the day of persecution, in the hour of tribulation, and in the night of adversity, he is there, to defend and comfort his flock.

VII. A Shepherd is very tender of his flock, will not overdrive them, takes special care of the lambs, and those that are weak and feeble. Gen. 3 : 13.

And the great characteristic of Christ is tenderness and compassion, Isa. 40 : 11; 35 : 8. "He will not break the bruised reed," etc.

VIII. When a Shepherd has lost a Sheep, or a lamb is gone astray, he will seek it diligently, and when he has found it, he will bring it home with joy, saying to his neighbors, "Rejoice with me," etc. Luke 15 : 5, 6.

Christ, the chief Shepherd, came to seek and to save that which was lost; and it is his pleasure to restore wanderers, as David, Peter, etc. He says, "Blessed are they who mourn," etc. A mourning, returning sheep, is the object of his special regard. See Luke 15 : 4, 5.

IX. A Shepherd heals the diseases of his Sheep. See Ezek. 34 : 4.

Christ binds up the broken-hearted, restores sight to the blind, and sets at liberty them that are bruised. See Ezek. 34 : 16.

X. A Shepherd tenderly regards that Sheep that is oppressed, injured, or thrust out of the fold by another, and he will deal with the aggressor accordingly.

Christ judges between member and member. If the rich oppress the poor, or the strong the weak, and retain their right, or would unjustly thrust them out of the Church, Christ marks such procedure, and will reward accordingly. Mark 10 : 42; 3 John 9 : 10; Col. 3 : 25.

XI. A Shepherd delights in the prosperity of his flock.

So Christ sees of the travail of his soul and is satisfied, when his people grow in grace, and in the fruits of the Spirit. "Herein is," etc. John 15 : 8.

Lastly. A Shepherd separates the Sheep from the goats.

Christ will make a plain decision at the last day. See Matt. 25 : 32. He will separate the precious from the vile. While the unbelieving are condemned, he will bind up his jewels. Mal. 3 : 16-18.

APPLICATION.

1. Christians are Christ's property, and the objects of his special

love and care. His by creation, by the donation of Jehovah. John 15: 16. His by purchase, for he bought them with the price of his blood.

2. What a glorious Shepherd has the flock of God! He is the Son of God. Think of his attributes. All enemies must flee before him. Every want of his people he will supply.

3. Hence the everlasting safety of his flock. John 10: 28.

IX. — DIVINE GRACE PRODUCTIVE OF BROTHERLY LOVE.

"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently."—1 PET. 1: 22.

ONE of the most distinguished peculiarities of Christianity is, that it suggests entirely new motives to action. The inducements which reason might offer, would be weak and inefficient. Those identified with Christianity, and they alone, are capable of restraining the passions of men, and of regulating their conduct. — The love of Christ, for instance, displayed in his sufferings and death, is a powerful motive to holy action and devotedness to promote the good of mankind. The direct influence of the grace of God upon the soul is love to the Author of spiritual existence, and intense solicitude for the welfare of brethren in the Lord, and for the salvation of those yet afar off by wicked works. — How beautiful is Christianity when experimentally felt, and when practically exhibited by brotherly and philanthropic love!

I. THE OPERATION OF DIVINE GRACE, AS HERE EXPRESSED. The persons addressed were Christians, v. 1, 2, 3, etc.

1. They had "*obeyed the truth.*" By the "*truth*" is meant the Gospel, which is a revelation of mercy to fallen man, through the mediation of Jesus Christ. It proposes to the fallen and perishing sinner reconciliation with God, the removal of guilt and fear, etc., on the condition of repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. — By "*obeying the truth,*" we are to understand a compliance with those conditions. Further, it is implied,

(1.) They had become *acquainted with "the truth,"* in its representations of themselves as guilty sinners, and of Jesus Christ as a gracious, willing, and Almighty Saviour. They had heard it preached, they studied it, they searched the Scriptures. Their minds were enlightened, convinced, and interested in the "*truth.*"

(2.) They deeply felt *their need of the provisions of grace* announced by the truth. It announced that Jesus "*came into the world to save sinners.*" They felt they were sinners. It announced that he "*came to seek and to save that which was lost.*" They felt they were lost. It announced Christ as a Physician. They felt themselves sick. If Christ

was announced as the Light of the world, the illuminating Prophet, the atoning Priest, the Sovereign Redeemer, the Fountain of Purification, or the subjugating King, they felt their need of him in all his offices of grace, and in all his prerogatives of mercy. "The great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come who are *"ready to perish."*

(3.) They had followed or *"obeyed" the directions of the truth.* It is the glory of the Gospel that it solves the mighty problem, "What must I do to be saved?" Did it say, Repent? They abhorred themselves as in dust and ashes. They regretted the past. They confessed their sins with godly contrition. The wicked forsook his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and returned unto God, etc. Did it say, Believe? Humbly, thankfully, earnestly, they fled to the cross to lay hold on the hope set before them. They lost their self-righteousness there. They looked up to the dying Sufferer, to the vicarious sacrifice; they looked and lived. Their sins were all absolved there, the burden of guilt dropped from their souls there. They were completely justified there, and there, at the altar of the cross, the still, small voice of the Spirit whispered to their souls, "Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace."

Thus "the truth" was not merely admired, credited, applauded, recommended, or defended and supported, but it was *"obeyed."* And this is no less than *"believing;"* that great principle placed in the soul by the Omnipotent energy of the Holy Spirit, and which principle, as a key, opens the storehouse of grace and heaven, and which, by connecting with Christ, conquers sin, death, and the grave.

2. *The effect of this obedience.*

(1.) *Purification of soul.* And this is important; without it no man can see the Lord. "Seeing ye have purified your souls," etc., i. e., it has not been effected by yourselves; you are saved by grace; the Spirit has brought the ministry of truth home to your hearts; it has directed you to the Fountain of purification, and by the blood of Christ you have been cleansed from all sin. — It is not mere outward reformation, a regulation of conduct, a course of action adopted to maintain our reputation and respect in the world; it is not mere form or profession, or charitable deeds designed to commend us to God. No. It is purification of soul. — Obeying the truth, or faith in Christ, produces it: faith cannot exist without producing purity. Acts 15: 8, 9; 1 John 3: 3. — If purity does not characterize a profession of the Gospel, there is no faith, or faith is dead, James 2: 19, 20; Titus 2: 11, 12.

(2.) *Unfeigned love of the brethren.* All believers are styled "the family of God;" they are brethren in the Lord. God is their father, Christ their Redeemer and the Head of the family. They are all united to him by faith — they believe the same doctrines, realize the same joys; they are travelling in the same path to the same glorious heaven, where they hope to live in sweet and holy fellowship forever and ever. It is natural, therefore, that they should love one another. "Faith worketh by love." Grace in the heart removes prejudice, disaffection, and disinclination to communion with the saints. It is an undeniable evidence of regeneration. 1 John 4: 7, 11, 12, 20, 21.

3. *The agency by which these effects were produced.* The influence of the Spirit is a first cause of participation in Divine grace. To effect this, Christ promised to send the Comforter. See John 16 : 7, etc. The text says, "through the Spirit." "It is not by might, it is not by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." All gifts and graces are communicated by the Spirit, 1 Cor. 12 : 7-11. Purity is produced by the Spirit, Rom. 8 : 13. And "the fruit of the Spirit is love." Gal. 5 : 22.

II. THE EXHORTATION OF THE APOSTLE IN CONSEQUENCE OF SUCH GRACIOUS OPERATION. "See that ye love one another," etc.

1. Let brotherly love be exercised with *sincerity*; for the Spirit cannot produce that which is otherwise. — Brotherly love is not mere respect, mere politeness, courteousness, or civility, though these are essential to Christian character. It is not a mere profession of friendship before the face, etc.; it is *love unfeigned*; it really exists as a constituent part of Christian brotherhood.

2. It is to be exercised with a "*pure heart.*" How many unite in church fellowship, actuated by impure motives : to promote their secular interest, to advance their own honor, to display their talent, and spread their fame! But the sincere soul acts from purity of motive. He is in the Church because it accords with the Divine will; he is there to promote his own happiness, to get good from his brethren, and to do them good. "That I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me," said Paul.

3. *Brotherly love is to be fervent.* "With a pure heart *fervently.*" An intense and burning love. To the brethren, if sincere, though illiterate, simple; though poor, mean; though imperfect, yet anxious to be right; though afflicted, and bowed down with anguish. Thus it must be *impartial*, and it must be universal. James 2 : 1-6. It must be "*in deed and in truth,*" not professing and promising, but performing acts of kindness. See 1 John 3 : 18.

APPLICATION.

1. Are we the subjects of these gracious operations?
2. If love to brethren exist not here, we are not fit for the kingdom of heaven.

X.—GRATITUDE FOR SPIRITUAL DELIVERANCE.

"And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee; though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me," etc.—ISAIAH 12 : 1, 2.

THE preceding chapter and this refer to the Gospel era; to the coming of Christ, the great Deliverer and Ransomer of the souls of men. It is implied that myriads should avail themselves of his salvation, and

the text contains the song of triumph which they should sing. And this prophecy has been fulfilled. Millions of souls have received Christ and realized the power of his blood. Praise, vocal and practical, devotedness to God, have been the necessary effect. The feelings of all true Christians harmonize with this language, and their tongues can articulate this praise, "O Lord," etc. The text expresses,

I. THE STATE OF MAN WITHOUT AN INTEREST IN CHRIST.

1. *He is the subject of God's righteous displeasure.* "Thou wast angry with me;" better translated, "Thou *hast been* angry with me." God is said to be "angry with the wicked every day." Ps. 7 : 11, 76 : 7; 2 : 12. Wrath, when predicated of the Divine Being, does not signify anything like an evil passion, as it commonly does among men. Such terms are employed to express his righteous displeasure against sin. He hates it with a perfect hatred. It is an abominable thing in his sight. The wrath of God, anger of God, etc., cannot be otherwise expressed in human language, than by an appeal to our own passions, and thus condescending to our weakness and ignorance. The wrath of God has fallen upon nations and individuals, as the Scriptures declare. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." Rom. 1 : 18. We may crouch before men; we may tremble at their power, and be terrified by their wrath; but "Who knoweth the power of *Thine* anger"? etc. Ps. 90 : 14, 7. God hates sin! For a proof of it, look back to the manner in which he promulgated his law; the earthquake, thunder, lightning, darkness, and fire; the mountain shaking, the people trembling, Moses himself affrighted; and if this was the case in giving the law, what must it be when the transgressors of it shall be punished? God hates sin! For a proof of it, look to Gethsemane—look to Calvary. God angry with Christ, the Substitute of man. See that agony! That winepress of wrath, how it crushes him; that baptism of blood, how overwhelming; those arrows of wrath, how piercing; that flaming sword, how it smites him; that *curse* of wrath, how it puts him to death in the flesh, and subjects him to unparalleled anguish of soul! "Awake, O sword," etc. Zech. 13 : 7.

Why was the Divine Being angry with his people in their unregenerate state? Because,

(1.) *They were depraved.* This is the state of all. The heart is corrupt—an impure fountain, from which emanate the most filthy and deadly streams of action. "The heart is deceitful," etc., the "conscience is defiled," the understanding is darkened, the judgment is perverted; the whole soul is alienated from God, and opposed to his righteous will. Can God, who is infinitely pure, love such a being? No.—Once I was such, says the Christian, and he was "angry with me."

(2.) *They were transgressors of the law.* Gal. 3 : 10. That law was, "holy, just, and good," and therefore under its curse. "Tribulation and anguish," etc. Rom. 2 : 9; 3 : 19. "Cursed is every one," etc. God was angry with them. Then may the Christian say, "I was a victim of Divine fury; then I had no peace, no hope, God was against me," etc.

2. Their state was, of necessity, one of *misery*. The state of every sinner is so. The commission of sin can yield no lasting satisfaction. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." The abject state of a sinner is described, Eph. 2: 1-3, 11-13; 4: 19. etc. "Thou comfortedst me," implies that in a state of alienation from God there was no comfort, but a "fearful looking for of judgment," etc.—It is awful to live in the presence of one who is constantly incensed against us.—What though a sinner may be loaded with wealth, clothed with purple, crowned with honor, fare sumptuously every day, etc., he has no "comfort," no "salvation," no hope.—The text expresses,

II. THEIR DELIVERANCE. "Thine anger is turned away." This is effected,

1. *By the Mediation of Christ*. The anger against me fell upon him. "He came into this world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." "He loved me, and gave himself for me." "He was wounded," etc. Isa. 53: 4-6; Gal. 3: 13; Col. 1: 14, 20, 21.

2. It is experienced in the act of *pardon and justification*. Rom. 5: 1; 8: 1, 33, 34. "Thine anger is turned away." Christ has answered for me. He is my surety. Through him, thy smile, O God, is as kind and complacent, as that which thou gavest to Adam in his primeval glory; as kind and enrapturing as that which thou givest to angels who have kept their first estate. In Christ I am regarded as innocent. "Thine anger is turned away from me upon Christ." I am free. "If, therefore," etc. John 8: 36.—The text is expressive,

III. OF COMFORT. "Thou comfortedst me."

1st. When *convicted of sin and guilt*, and desponding of mercy, then thou gavest me to see the fulness of grace flowing from the cross. Though my sins were as scarlet, and red like crimson, my soul deeply tinctured with guilt, and oppressed with multitudes of sins, thou saidst to me, "Be of good cheer; thy sins are all forgiven thee, go in peace." Then thou didst banish my doubts and quelled my fears. Thou gavest me faith. I believed, and pardon came, and peace succeeded my storm of anguish.

2. By giving me *the assurance of faith*. What comfort is this! "Behold, God is my salvation: the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation."

He has given me so clear a conception of his infinite power and willingness as a Saviour, and of the efficacy of his blood, that I unhesitatingly rely upon him for final acceptance and everlasting salvation. I do not doubt. I feel accepted. I am saved. Christ is mine. "I know whom I have believed."

3. By the *Privileges of adoption*. My Almighty Father's house, his ordinances, his promises, his work, his children, his spiritual blessings—all comfort me. They are "wells of salvation," sources of solid and undying comfort.

4. In every season of *distress and darkness*. He sweetens the bit-
ters of life; he alleviates my sorrows; in my weakness, he strengthens.

He is with me in adversity, comforts me on the bed of languishing, etc. The text expresses,

IV. TRIUMPH. "*I will trust, and not be afraid.*" I am accepted in the Beloved. I have an interest in the covenant of grace, and why should I fear? My Redeemer has power—his love is immutable; he loves his own to the end.

I will not be afraid of my *troubles*. They may be necessary to promote my sanctification, and they will have a good issue.

I will not be afraid of my *foes*. He that is for me is more than all they that are against me.

I will not be afraid of being finally lost. Satan cannot wrest me from the embrace of my glorious Shepherd. "I give unto my sheep," etc. John 10 : 28.

I will not be afraid of *death*, and its consequent *corruption*. Ps. 28 : 4.

I will thus constantly trust in him, and not be afraid. I discover my calling. I am one of the chosen. Though unworthy, the Saviour accounts me one of his jewels, to show forth his praise forever. The text expresses,

V. GRATEFUL HOMAGE. "I will praise thee."

Blessings so great demand praise; if enjoyed, they will produce a thankful heart, a praying tongue, an active life, giving glory to God.

XI.—COMMUNION WITH GOD.

"It is good for me to draw near to God."—Ps. 73 : 28.

PRAYER is a duty and privilege of great importance, and of absolute necessity. Before we enter heaven we must pray. All who have entered that bright world have loved prayer. We can never perform our duties aright—never overcome our foes successfully—never be pleasing to God, and never fully taste the pleasures of religion, without prayer. Prayer is a constituent element of the Christian character, and an evidence of his vitality. "Behold he prayeth." Acts 9 : 11.—When the Psalmist Asaph compared the afflictions of the righteous with the prosperity of the wicked, he was tempted to infidelity, but was preserved from it by repairing to the sanctuary. There he saw the end of the wicked, and his own vileness. Then he saw the excellency of communion with God. "But it is good," etc.

I. EXPLAIN THE DUTY AND PRIVILEGE. "To draw near to God."

1. Observe what this presupposes. It implies,

(1.) *That sin has rendered God inaccessible.* "Your sins have separated between God and you."

(2.) *God is accessible through Christ.* He is the great Mediator

—the way to the Father—broken down the middle wall of partition. Heb. 10:19, 20. The great Intercessor pleads our cause in heaven. Eph. 3:12; Heb. 4:14–16. He perfumes our prayers by the incense of his meritorious sacrifice.

(3.) It is an *act of infinite love and condescension* to allow sinners to “draw near to him.” Job thought it almost incredible, ch. 9:16. Solomon was overwhelmed with the magnificence of the idea, that God should dwell, etc. 1 Kings 8:27. Yet through Christ, he grants the privilege. Enoch and Noah walked with God, Abraham and David communed with him, and all the contrite enjoy this inestimable privilege. Isa. 66:1, 2.

(4.) There are *particular seasons and circumstances*, in which it is necessary to draw near to God.

When the soul is oppressed with guilt, and pants for forgiveness. — In a time of adversity, when poverty chills and depresses the mind. — In the hour of temptation, when Satan desires to have us; when the world fascinates, and would ensnare us; when the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches threaten to annihilate the good seed of the kingdom. — In the season of bereavement, when separations the most painful and cutting are made by the grim tyrant. — In the season of bodily affliction, when we go down to the gates of the grave. — In prospect of death. — At a time when the arrangements of Divine Providence appear dark, complex, and inscrutable, as in the case of Asaph. Blessed are they who *draw near to God* in such seasons.

(5.) That we are more disposed in those trials to *depend upon our own strength and wisdom* than to draw near to God. How seldom is the “burden” cast upon the Lord! etc. We endeavor to carry it ourselves. Some depend upon natural courage—some are apathetic, and let things take their course—some pretend philosophy—some rush to company, to amusement, to the intoxicating cup, etc. — Let the Christian “draw near to God.”

2d. *What does this duty imply?*

(1.) *Conviction of need*—the nature of our trials, our weakness and incapacity to bear them.

(2.) *A full persuasion that God is able and willing to help us.* “He that comes unto God must believe that he is,” etc.

(3.) *Believing prayer.* Spreading our wants before our Father at the throne of his grace, in humble dependence upon the promises he has made. “Ask, and ye shall receive,” etc. James 1:6; 1 John 5:14.

Our faith must ever rest upon our *great High-Priest*, who appears in the presence of God for us. See John 14:6–13; Heb. 7:25. The solemn duty of prayer must not be attended to superficially, nor performed as a duty merely, but be regarded as intimate fellowship with him. See it in Abraham’s intercession, Gen. 18:32, 33; Job 23:3, 4.

(4.) *Self-examination, and the renunciation of every evil.* When Jacob went up to Bethel, he purified himself and his household

from all idols, and built an altar to the Lord. Ex. 35 : 1-4. So David, Ps. 26 : 6, and when we draw near, we must cleanse our hands, etc. James 4 : 8 ; Heb. 10 : 22.

II. POINT OUT THE ADVANTAGES RESULTING FROM DRAWING NEAR TO GOD. It is good,

1st. Because we *obtain the blessings we need*. Is it not good to obtain *pardon—comfort* in times of distress—strengthen our weakness? etc. How good the promise to Paul, the result of drawing near to God, “My grace”! etc. [Amplify.]

These blessings the Christian regards as inestimable; he regards them as lovely jewels brought from the cabinet of God’s mercy. When he considers of what the blessings of the covenant consist, the heart which devised them, the hand which offers them, and the goodness which bestows them, he sees their value, and loves the Giver.

2d. *Because our errors are corrected*. As in the case of Asaph. Drawing near to God annihilated his predilection for Atheism. Is distrust arising in thy mind—is anger fermenting—dost thou begin to feel worldly and sensual—art thou tiring in the ways of God? go to the throne of grace—pray earnestly, and thou shalt be preserved.

3d. Preserved from the *consequences of backsliding*. Declensions induced by neglect of prayer. If drawing near to God preserves, how great is the privilege! By it the life of God is maintained in the soul.

4th. It prepares for the discharge of spiritual duties, and makes useful and honorable in the world.

5th. *It is always pleasant*. “It is good.” [Amplify.]

6th. *It prepares for heaven and glory*. Our approaches to God on earth are the prelude of our dwelling in his presence forever. Ps. 16 : 11 ; 73 : 24.

XII.—THE UNPARALLELED SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.

“As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: so shall he sprinkle many nations.” — Isa. 52 : 14.

God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the Levitical priesthood, by their typical sacrifices, and by the inspired prophets, to the great joy of his Church then, hath, in these last days, spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the world; who being the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, was qualified to become the Surety of guilty man, and by his unparalleled sufferings and

ignominious death, to "purge away our sins." — This subject is always interesting to the man who has felt its power. It has been so in time past, it will be till time shall be no more, and it will be in a more eminent manner in the heaven of heavens.

In v. 1, 2, the captivity of the Jews in Babylon is described. Jehovah appears as the deliverer of the chosen tribes. This deliverance deeply impressed the mind of the prophet, and his attention was immediately fixed on that great salvation, of which that from Babylon was but a figure. The Author of man's great salvation is presented before us as a "man of sorrows," etc., in a state of severe and humiliating suffering, etc.

I. THE UNPARALLELED ABASEMENT AND SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST. "His visage," etc. This will appear if we consider,

1st. *The glory* from which he descended to become incarnate. He dwelt "in the bosom of the Father," John 1 : 18. Solomon speaks of him under the character of Wisdom, Prov. 8 : 22-31. Isaiah saw his essential glory in the Temple, Isa. 6 : 1, etc. John describes his eternity, power, and glory, John 1 : 1-4, 14. Jesus himself declared his pre-existence in heaven: "Before Abraham was, I am." Paul declares his equality with essential Deity, Phil. 2 : 6, and his mysterious transition from heaven to earth, to veil his splendors in a tabernacle of flesh in "the form of a servant."

Thus as the "only Begotten of the Father," he dwelt in the "high and lofty place." There angels, the first-born sons of light, worshipped him; the cherubim and seraphim adored him, as the "image of the invisible God," etc. Col. 1 : 15, etc. There "he was rich" in all the glories of the Divinity, in the boundless opulence of the universe, and in the ascriptions of praise incessantly ascribed to him. Yet, astonishing condescension! he vacated that throne of splendor, he quitted the temple of praise, left the greetings of seraphs, and came down to earth to die. — What if an earthly king were to quit his throne, etc., for the benefit of his subjects! — What if an angel were to visit this sinful orb, and become the subject of infirmity, poverty, persecution, sufferings, and death! All comparisons fail! "His visage," etc.

2d. Unparalleled, if we consider his *incarnation, and the various stages of his humiliation*. He veiled the Divine nature in the form of humanity, characterized by meanness, destitution, suffering, ignominy, death, and all this voluntarily.

He suffered the *weakness of infancy*, and the infirmities of childhood. "He became as our brother that sucked the breasts of our mother." In the Babe of Bethlehem appears the mysterious union of impotence and omnipotence, the Mighty God and the infant of days.

In the morning of life he was *persecuted*. The envy and bloody rage of Herod compelled the flight to Egypt, to escape that ferocious tyrant, in whose nature no traces of compassion were found. "Out of Egypt have I called my Son."

Poor was his *parentage and life*. He was born, not in a palace, but in a stable, and cradled in a manger. His mother was a poor obscure woman, not a princess. His supposed father was not a potentate, but

an humble mechanic. He had no certain dwelling-place. "Foxes have holes," etc. From his birth to his death he was poor. "Though he was rich," etc. He lodged in another man's house, fed at another man's table, he preached in another man's ship, he prayed in another man's garden, he rode to Jerusalem on another man's ass, and he was buried in another man's grave.

He suffered *hunger* — he to whom belong the cattle upon a thousand hills, and the fruitful valleys beneath. He suffered *thirst* — he who gives rain, and refreshes with showers the grass, and the lilies of the field — he who gives the vine its fruit to cheer the heart of man. He endured *fatigue* — he who bears up the pillars of the universe, sat down, weary, with his journey, at Jacob's well. — Consider,

3d. *The treatment he received from men.* He suffered *reproach*. "I am a worm, and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people." He was charged with sedition against Cæsar's government. He was called an impostor, a blasphemer, a devil, a gluttonous man, etc. He suffered from *perfidy*. Judas betrayed him with a kiss, Peter denied him with oaths, all his disciples forsook him and fled. He was apprehended like a criminal. He was unjustly tried, having been falsely accused, and condemned to die as a traitor to his country, and a blasphemer of his God. "Reproach hath broken my heart," etc. Ps. 59 : 20. "His visage was so marred," etc.

Follow him to the garden, and behold his sweat, like great drops of blood, etc.; and if we gaze on him there, we shall see depicted in his countenance all the sad emotions of his heart; that "his visage," etc. — Follow him to the judgment-hall: there he is begirt with a gorgeous robe of mockery, and there was his placid brow entwined with a crown of thorns. They mocked and scourged him. "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheek to them that plucked off the hair." They smote him with a reed, and did spit upon him, and the blood and spittle, together, clotted his flowing locks: and in that condition, a spectacle to God, to angels, etc., the Roman Governor introduced him to the people, saying, "Behold the man!"

Follow him to Golgotha, and behold his death by crucifixion, which was painful, degrading, and accursed. No death was so *painful* as crucifixion. His hands and his feet — the most sensitive parts of the body — were secured to the cross by rugged nails, etc. [Amplify.] — His death was degrading, for it was the death of a slave. Degrading, for he died with two malefactors, — died in the midst of them, as if he had been the vilest of the three, — and one of them cursed him. Oh, shameful death! [Amplify.] "His visage," etc.

To complete the violence offered to his person: after he was dead, one of the soldiers, with a spear, pierced his side; and forthwith came thereout blood and water. — No countenance ever bore more distinguished lines of anguish, and no man was ever exposed to more painful suffering by his agony, by the murderous treatment of his enemies, and by his accursed death. Behold him in these tragic scenes! "His visage is so marred, more than any man," etc. Whatever was the dignity of thy person, O Redeemer, the elegance of thy form, and

the beauty of thy countenance; all is *marred* now. Thy mind, impregnated with the attributes of Godhead, — thy mind, never ruffled with anger, or rent by the storms of passion, — thy mind, the very embodiment of heaven, gave to thy person and countenance, beauty, meekness, placidity, and majesty! But now thy “visage is marred more,” etc. Thy saddened countenance, O man of sorrows, thy bleeding brow, thy clotted locks, thy fainting spirit, should rend all human hearts. The tears of sorrow rushing down thy cheeks, the poignant crown, the knotted scourges, the rugged nails, the dislocating shock, have effaced the bloom of thy countenance, and dimmed the lustre of thine eyes. I see there, on that cross, pale, bleeding, dead, and ghastly, thy “visage marred more,” etc.

“Behold the man!” — Are these the gracious eyes
Whose beams could kindle life among the dead?
Is this the awful and majestic head
Of Him, the Lord Almighty, and all-wise?
Are these the hands that stretched abroad the skies,
And earth with verdure, heaven with stars o’erspread?
Are these the feet that on the waves would tread,
And calm the rage when wildest tempests rise?
Ah, me! all wounded and disfigured now!
Those eyes — the joy of heaven — eclipsed in night;
Torn, bleeding, pale these hands, these feet, this brow
I weep for love, grief, rapture, at the sight.
My Lord! my God! — For me, for me, didst thou
In shame, reproach, and suffering, thus delight!

II. THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST HAVE BEEN PRODUCTIVE OF ASTONISHMENT. “As many were astonished at thee.” The whole scene was calculated to produce it. Never had such a Being stood before a tribunal, or been condemned to a death so tragical. Greater than all the Cæsars; wiser than all the philosophers; more benevolent than all the good; more virtuous than all the just; more devout than all the holiest teachers of theology. He was the glory of the human nature; the express image of the Divine, — and yet he *suffered and died*. Oh, what evil, what venom, what hate must there be in sin, to have caused the death of the Just One! “As many were astonished,” etc.

The disciples saw him on the cross; they gazed on their Lord and Master with amazement, and scarcely recovered themselves before the third day.

The women who followed him from Galilee to Jerusalem, stood afar off, “astonished,” and smote their breasts.

The thousands whom he had instructed, healed, and cured, were struck with astonishment to witness the tragical conclusion of a life so benevolent and useful.

Devils were *astonished* when they saw the shafts of their malice recoil, and all their infernal plans frustrated. — Angels were *astonished* when they saw him whom they had worshipped, etc., “marred more than any man,” etc.

Nature was *astonished*, and uttered her voice. All her elements joined in the universal consternation. The sun refused to shine — darkness was over all the land — the graves opened, and their dead arose — the veil of the temple was rent by a mysterious hand — the earth was

shaken to its foundations, and the rocks were cloven asunder. Nations have been clad in funereal attire on the demise of the monarch who swayed the sceptre, or the hero who fought and conquered on the field of battle; but never did the orb of day hide his lustre to mark the death of mortal man; he shines with the same radiance on the morning of a monarch's exit as on that of his coronation. A tomb is opened by human hands to receive the relics of earthly majesty, but no concussion shakes the terrestrial ball: all nature stands a silent spectator of the scene.——But when the Redeemer died, nature stood aghast: she uttered her voice, and proclaimed his dignity to the universe. Clad in preternatural darkness, she uttered her groans, and refused to behold the sight. And man—guilty, rebellious man—was the cause of that which shook heaven and earth.

I asked the Heavens, "What foe to God hath done
This unexampled deed?" The Heavens exclaim,
"T was man! and we in horror snatched the sun
From such a spectacle of guilt and shame."

I asked the Sea;—the Sea in fury boiled,
And answered with his voice of storms, "T was man!
My waves in panic at his crime recoiled,
Disclosed the abyss, and from the centre ran."

I asked the earth:—the Earth replied aghast,
"T was man! and such strange pangs my bosom rent,
That still I groan, and shudder at the past."
To Man—gay, thoughtless Man—I went,
And asked him next: He turned a scornful eye,
Shook his proud head, and deigned me no reply!

II. THE SUFFERINGS AND DEATH OF CHRIST WERE VICARIOUS.

They differed from those of a martyr, who died as a witness of the truth, etc. It is evident, from the Old and New Testaments, that Christ's death was sacrificial and atoning.

"So shall he sprinkle many nations." Here is a reference to the rites of the ceremonial law. Not at all to the ordinance of baptism, and to a particular mode of its administration. Nor, primarily to the extensive diffusion of the Gospel; though that, secondarily, is implied Under the Levitical economy, there was the sprinkling of the blood of atonement once a year; secondly, the sprinkling of water on the unclean person,—called the water of separation,—by which a person was separated to a holy purpose; thirdly, a sprinkling of water and of blood on the leper, by which he was pronounced clean, and needed no longer to remain without the camp. These sprinklings convey two ideas in their typical reference to Christ:

1. *An atonement.* "By whom (Christ) we have received the atonement." Rom. 5: 11. See 1 Pet. 3: 18; Eph. 2: 13–17; Col. 1: 14; *cum multis*. If remission of sins was necessary under the law, surely it was so "when the fulness of time was come." Yes, the glorious design of his unparalleled sorrows, etc., was to expiate transgression, and to make an end of sin. See Isa. 53. [Amplify.]

2. *Purification.* Sin was not only atoned for, but "a fountain was opened to cleanse," etc., Zech. 13: 1. "Christ loved the Church," etc. Eph. 5: 25, etc. See Heb. 9: 13, 14. Delightful thought! "Though your sins be as scarlet," etc. "If we confess," etc. — Let none be

content with the sacrifice, and reject the purification. "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid." Faith worketh by love, and purifies the heart. He is a vain man who loves the creed, and hates the commandment. Titus 2: 14.

IV. THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST ARE DESIGNED TO BENEFIT THE WORLD. "So shall he sprinkle many nations." The Gospel shall be universally diffused.

The record of the Redeemer's sacrifice is to be *diffused*. It is the decree of God. It is the will of Christ. It is the subject of Divine prophecy. The nations are diseased. Announce to them the Almighty Physician. They are perishing. Proclaim to them the Almighty Saviour. They are dying. Erect before them the standard of the cross. Cry out to them, Look and live. "Behold the Lamb of God," etc.—— To "sprinkle" means to diffuse, to shed abroad. And so Christ gave his last injunction, "Go ye into all the world," etc. How many, on the day of Pentecost, were sprinkled by this precious blood. "Parthians, and Medes," etc. Acts 2: 9, etc. These were converted and saved, and when they arrived in their respective countries, they spread the knowledge of the crucified. [Amplify.]

That this world shall not always be Satan's empire — that a sublime and holy destiny awaits it, will appear.

1st. From the *promises* made especially to Christ, and the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform it. Ps. 2: 8; Isa. 9: 7; 49: 6; 58: 11.

2. The *prophecies and promises* given to the Church, warrant the expectation. The stone cut out of the mountain, without hands, is to become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth; a little leaven, etc., and the kingdoms shall be given to the saints of the Most High. Dan. 2: 34, 35; 7: 18, 27.

3d. The prophecies already accomplished add to this assurance. These are the first-fruits of the harvest.

XIII. — THE INFLUENCE OF THE SPIRIT.

"But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." — 1 JOHN 2: 20.

THE Gospel of Christ presents an illustrious display of the adorable mystery of the Sacred Trinity. The three Divine Persons are represented as sustaining different parts in the work of redemption, and with regard to each directs us to the discharge of distinct practical duties. On the one hand, we are taught to have access to the Father, through the Son, and by the Spirit; and on the other hand, to expect all spiritual blessings from the Father, through the Son, and by the Spirit. — We may learn from the text and the preceding verse, the cause of apostacy from God, v. 19; those who desert the cause of Christ, have, in all probability, never realized the Divine influence—they have no root in themselves; — and those who continue rooted and

grounded in the truth, fruitful in every good work, have been rendered so by the influence of the Spirit. "But ye have," etc.

I. THE PRIVILEGE OF TRUE CHRISTIANS. "But ye have an unction," etc.

The word "unction" alludes to the holy anointing oil of the law, Ex. 30: 22, etc. See also Ps. 45: 7. — The Holy Spirit was given to teach apostles, preachers, and all believers everything requisite for their salvation, and to make them instrumental in conveying to posterity the Gospel dispensation. As oil was used among the Asiatics for the inauguration of persons into important offices, and such unction was acknowledged to be an emblem of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, without which the duties of those offices could not be discharged; so it is put for the Spirit himself, who presided in the Church, and from whom all gifts and graces flowed.

1. *The Source, or Author of this unction, or influence.* "An unction from the Holy One," i. e., the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit is not a mere energy or virtue of the Deity, as some would assert. He is a Divine Person, equal in power and glory with the Father and Son. "There are three," etc. 1 John 5: 7. He is represented as equal with the Father and the Son, in the work of redemption. In this glorious plan, the peculiar office and prerogative of the Spirit is to apply the blessings of salvation, or they would be no benefit to the souls of men, no more than a rich feast inaccessible to a man perishing with hunger. — The many personal characters ascribed to him, prove and illustrate his distinct personality. Hence he is called the Spirit of God—the Spirit of Christ—the Spirit of promise—the Spirit of judgment—the Spirit of burning, Isa. 4: 4—the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus—the Spirit of grace and supplication—the Seven Spirits before the throne. He is called a Guide—a Comforter—a Reprover—a Witness—and the Spirit of grace and glory. Hence his distinct personality. He is the Author of that Divine unction by which his people are qualified for, and consecrated to, his service.

2d. *The Nature of Divine Unction or Influence.* To have "an unction from the Holy One," does not mean endowment with *extraordinary gifts*; as the gift of prophecy in the prophetic age, and the gift of miracles in the commencement of the Christian Church. Then miracles were necessary to prove the truth of Christian doctrines before Jews and Gentiles. As the necessity of miracles has ceased, the gift of miracles is withdrawn. — Neither does it imply an absolute or perfect possession. There is no man on earth, who has received so much of the influence of the Spirit, either that he can receive no more, or that he cannot be exceeded by others.

Believers are styled "*a royal priesthood*," 1 Pet. 2: 9, and by the unction of the Holy One, they are consecrated to that office, and devoted to God's glory. It is the office of the Spirit,

(1.) *To enlighten.* See John 14: 26; 16: 8-14. Hence he convinces the sinner of the error of his ways—his sinful and ruined condition before God—his need of Christ the Divine Surety. He enlightens the sinner to discover the character of Christ—the fulness, the richness, and

the freeness of his grace.——He “enlightens the eyes of the understanding,” that Christians may know what is the hope of their calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints; “by which they may be able to comprehend with all saints,” etc.

(2.) *To sanctify.* To make holy, and to set apart for God’s service. As the ancient priests were separated from the other tribes, and devoted to the service of God, so believers, by the word and the Spirit, are called out of the world—separated to the service of God.——And as ancient priests were consecrated to God through *Sacrifice*, Ex. 29 : 10, so the sinner approaches God, by *faith* in the Redeemer’s *sacrifice*, and is accepted. He is washed from his sins, purged from guilt, by the blood of Christ. He thus receives “an unction,” which leads him to the fountain opened to cleanse from sin, etc.——Hence the Holy One is the *Spirit of holiness*: he bears the name of *holy*; he leads and assists men to “crucify the flesh,” etc.; and the “fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth.”

(3.) *To consecrate.* Having led the soul to the enjoyment of forgiveness and purity, it also disposes to holy and cheerful obedience. The converted one begins to love the brethren, and to desire fellowship with them. And he consecrates himself to God by public profession, by open avowal of his attachment to the Church of God, and by subsequently devoting his leisure, his substance, and his talents to the service of God. He has received “an unction” from the Holy One, and it is love—to Christ—to man—to his brethren, etc. The “Holy One” is the *Spirit of love*. “The love of God is shed abroad,” etc. Rom. 5 : 5. The Holy One unites all Christians, and induces them to keep the unity of the Spirit, etc.

(4.) *To give efficiency to the efforts of the Church.* Unless we have “an unction,” etc., we shall never *design*, far less *execute*, great things for God. By this unction we are enabled to glorify God with our bodies, etc.—and even to honor him in the face of the greatest difficulties and dangers. Ps. 18 : 29, 32–34. This gave efficiency to Apostolic labors on the day of Pentecost, etc. 1 Cor. 3 : 7, 8; Zech. 4 : 6. It was this which made the Reformers oppose the Church of Rome, and to endanger their lives for the cause of truth. It was this which fitted the humanity of Christ for commencing and completing the work which was given him to do. Isa. 42 : 1.

(5.) *To comfort.* He is called “the Comforter.” He imparts comfort in every season—he bears witness—he leads to every source of comfort. He is the *Spirit of anticipation*, for while he enables believers to exclaim, “Abba Father,” he assures them that they are “heirs—heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus;” they look beyond the shadows of the grave to bright and ineffable glory, to the inheritance incorruptible.

II. AN IMPORTANT SALUTARY EFFECT. “Ye know all things.”——Not absolutely, but with restriction and limitation. “All things,” that is, all *divine* things revealed, and all things that are revealed necessary to salvation—all things needful to be known, and as far as needful for you to know. “All things” relating to Christ, to the Spirit, to the law, the Gospel, to your foes, your

duties, to grace and glory. You know all things by virtue of *the unction*, etc.

1. You know and understand *the plan of salvation*, and *your need of it*. And not only in theory, but experimentally and practically. And this knowledge is superior to all other knowledge. It gives you a dignity and a glory greater than that of kings and princes. It infinitely exalts you above all persons who know it not.

2. You know *your own deficiency*, and where your *strength* lies, even in God. "If God be for you," etc. You know all your foes, their nature, their wiles, etc., and you know that God is your refuge.

3. You know *the gracious designs of Divine Providence*. Though its procedure may be mysterious and obscure, yet that "all things shall work together," etc. You see the hand of God in everything. Why did the terrors of the world appear nothing to Stephen, dying amid the cruelties of the Jews: and nothing to all the army of martyrs, who have washed, etc. This unction caused Paul to triumph, 2 Cor. 6: 9, 10.

4. You know *all the pleasures connected with religion*. Holy fellowship, prayer, praise, faith, hope, joy, etc., for ye have "an unction from," etc. When the Spirit draws, it is easy running in the way of God's commandments. What oil is to the chariot wheels, what wings are to a bird, what wind and sails are to a ship, what rain is to the parched ground, what the sun is to vegetation, so is the agency of the Spirit to believers in running the Christian race. When it is suspended, comfort dies, their hands hang down, their knees are feeble, and their hearts are faint.

5. You know *the end of your calling*; that in heaven you have an enduring substance. You know its grandeur, its employments, its pleasures, its inhabitants, as they are described in the sacred oracles, and as applied to you by an unction from the Holy One. You know that you have a title to it, a meetness for it, and that you shall enjoy it. You know whom you have believed, etc. — Then you will *really know all things*.

Lastly, you know all these things, and that *distinguishes you from all apostates*. See verse preceding the text. The unction from the Holy One will keep you from falling, etc.

XIV.—GOD'S GRACIOUS REGARD TO THE RIGHTEOUS.

"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and thought upon his name."—MAL. 3: 16.

CHRISTIANS are called the light of the world and the salt of the earth; their influence is, irradiation and preservation. — Hence their influence is always valuable. It appears so especially in dark

seasons, when religion has declined, and when few enjoy it. — Christians are always dear to God, in every state and circumstance. If he sees his image in them; if they fear him and think upon his name, and love his cause, then “the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.” — At the time the prophet wrote these words, there were few of this character. Even the priests were corrupt, and they had depraved the law; they were enemies to true religion, and nearly all the people were like them. They said it was “vain to serve God.” The text contradicts such a statement.

I. THE CHARACTER OF GOD’S PEOPLE.

1st. *They feared the Lord.* While all around them were practical Atheists, they felt the importance of true religion. — This fear is not a *slavish fear*, but a filial one. The former is destroyed by *faith* in Jesus the Saviour, who delivers the soul from guilt and condemnation, etc.; the latter is induced by *adopting love*, which gives confidence in God, assurance of his constant pity and love, Rom. 8 : 15.

True Christians are like Obadiah, who “feared the Lord greatly;” like Abraham, of whom the angel said, “I know that thou fearest God,” Gen. 22 : 12; like the primitive church, “they walked in the fear of the Lord;” like Cornelius, who was “a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house.” — This divine principle, far from being the produce of the barren soil of nature, is wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God, according to the promise of the new covenant, “I will put,” etc., Jer. 32 : 40. — The saints fear and reverence the *majesty of God* — the *authority of God*, Matt. 10 : 28. This authority is so extensive, that it reaches to our present existence, and to our eternal destinies. They are afraid of *displeasing him*. They “stand in awe, and sin not.”

2d. *They delighted in Christian fellowship* and intercourse. “They spake often one to another.” They loved the sanctuary where their brethren worshipped; and all the means for social prayer and praise. “They took sweet counsel together,” etc. — No doubt they spoke of the best things. They spoke of Christ, and the glories of his kingdom — of his delivering power, and said, “Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I,” etc. — of his precious promises — of glory everlasting. The brother in adversity was cheered; the sick and the languid were animated and resigned — the tempted were succored and fortified — those ready to halt were induced to persevere and to hold fast, etc. Rom. 15 : 1; 1 Thess. 5 : 14.

3d. *They thought upon the name of the Lord.* His name was sacred to them; a fruitful source of profound and edifying meditation. The name of the Lord, is God himself in the plenitude of his power, omniscience, justice, goodness, mercy, and truth. — The Lord’s name was dear to them; they were concerned for its glory, and grieved for its dishonor.

(1.) To think on the name of the Lord, also implies a deep solicitude for the *prosperity of God’s cause* in the world. The name of the Lord is intimately connected with this. — When David thought of his

name, his heart was fixed on the prosperity of the Messiah's kingdom. — Here God is glorified in the highest.

(2.) The employment of our *individual instrumentality* to promote the Divine glory. We may be zealous in holy duties, etc., in order to raise our own name. This is vanity. — A true Christian consecrates his talents and powers to promote the glory of God, and he feels that, after having done all, he is but an unprofitable servant. "Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but unto *thy name* be all the glory."

II. THE DIVINE APPROBATION OF THE RIGHTEOUS. "The Lord hearkened," etc.

1. He graciously *noticed them and their services*. "He hearkened and heard." They met together, perhaps privately, as the sorrowful disciples did for fear of the Jews; but there was one that hearkened — heard — and approved.

Christians may be poor and illiterate, their services very imperfect; they may be despised, and their worship and communion ridiculed by the children of this world, yet the Lord "hearkens and hears" all their ministrations, their breathings of prayer, and their lisps of praise. Mean may be the place where they assemble, but the Lord loveth the gates of Zion, etc. He taketh pleasure in the prosperity of his servants. Graciously he attends to the groanings of the prisoners, to the cries of the needy, and the conversation of pilgrims bound for heaven. — He knows and approves the way of the righteous.

2. He granted them *a share in his affectionate remembrance*. "And a book of remembrance was written before him." Here is an allusion to the records kept by kings of all that was done for their honor, Esther 6 : 1. And so God will "render to every man according to his works."

What a glorious privilege for Christians to have their names and their deeds written in the book of remembrance—never to be forgotten! They merit not such an honor, but grace gives it to them. — To be remembered by one who is unable to do us any good, would answer but little purpose. Pharaoh's butler could do but little for Joseph while he was in prison; but, said he, "When it is well with thee, remember me." To have a friend in the king's presence would be of some advantage. Hence the prayer of the dying thief, "Lord, remember," etc. — God is all-sufficient, having at his command all the blessings of nature, by which he can amply repair every loss we may sustain for his sake; and all the blessings of grace, by which he can abundantly recompense and console us under all our sufferings. He has heaven and glory at his disposal. — Prophets, apostles, martyrs, all the servants of Christ, have been remembered.

At the great last day he will produce the book that was written before him, and read it in the presence of an assembled world, Matt. 25 : 19-23, 34, etc.

The following verse declares that then he will own them as his most valued treasure; "They shall be mine," etc. Mean as they have thought themselves to be, they shall be mine—mine forever. [Amplify.]

APPLICATION.

1. The nature of true religion. It consists not in pomp and splendor, nor in rites and ceremonies: but in filial reverence of God—fellowship with his people, and love to his name. All other religions are false.

2. Let your conduct, through Divine aid, be such as will bear the scrutiny of God, and such as he will remember.

3. Anticipate the day for “the manifestation of the sons of God.” Then all those who are accounted by the wicked the offscouring of all things, and the filth of the world, will be owned by Jehovah as his *jewels*, a figure expressive of infinite and everlasting endearment.

XV.—CHRISTIANS COMPARED TO JEWELS.

“And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.”—MAL 3: 17.

HOWEVER the children of God may be despised by the carnally-minded, yet they are beloved of the Lord. The appellations by which he addresses them, through the inspired writers, strikingly express his infinite affection. They are called his people, his flock, his children—a peculiar people, a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a chosen generation, the chosen, and the elect.——To represent their honor and blessedness, the Spirit of God has employed the choicest imagery furnished by the heavens above, the earth beneath, and by things under the earth. The *sun* indicates their progressive splendor unto the perfect day; the *stars*, or innumerable suns, the brilliancy with which they shall shine when mortality shall be swallowed up of life; the flowers in their beauty and fragrance, their moral excellence and beauty; the fruits of the trees, the corn of the field, and drops, and springs, and streams, and rivers of water, to denote their fruitfulness and utility in the world. Hosea 14: 5-7. And the very bowels of the earth furnish imagery to represent their present and future worth and glory. [Amplify.]

I. CONSIDER THE COMPARISON. Jewels are precious stones, or gems made of silver, gold, or other valuable materials, of the most attractive form and beautiful appearance, manifesting the skill and contrivance of the artist.——Christians are compared to jewels,

1. *For their origin.* Beautiful as jewels may appear, yet they were originally found in the bowels of the earth, or in the ocean’s bed, and often in connection with other materials of little value. To obtain them involves great labor, patience, and perseverance, in digging and quarrying into the places of their concealment.

Look at the origin of Christians. “Look unto the rock,” etc. Isa. 51: 1. Possessed of awful depravity, covered over with vileness. “From the crown of the head,” etc., active in the service of Satan—the slaves of sin—dead in trespasses and sin. The Lord finds all his people in
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the rough quarry of nature. By the ministry of his word, by providential dealings, in conjunction with the Spirit's omnipotent energy, he digs them out, "translates them," etc. — "turns them from darkness," etc. He brings them all out of a horrible pit — from the miry clay of sin, that they may be purified and become his jewels. Their outward circumstances are mean, poor, and, perhaps, degraded; but "God hath chosen the poor," etc. Lazarus, the degraded beggar, was a jewel.

2. *On account of the refining process to which they are subjected.* Jewels are made of precious stones, and sometimes set in gold and silver. But much previous preparation has given them their beauty. The artist has been employed to cut, form, and polish them. He has removed their excrescences, smoothed their surface, and brought out their colors. Some jewels may have required rougher and harder treatment, others more gentle. Gold and silver have to be purged from dross by fire.

And by the operations of the Divine Spirit, Jehovah polishes his jewels. After having extracted them from the quarry of natural depravity, and the deep pit of sin and condemnation, he moulds and smooths them to the fashion of his own moral likeness, Eph. 2 : 10 ; 4 : 24. Formerly they were like rough and rugged stones, but now they are like those hewn and polished after the similitude of a palace. The work of refining is carried on by the Almighty Artist, to prepare and embellish them for the "day of their manifestation," before the assembled worlds, and for their gathering together in the city of the great King. As in the erection of Solomon's temple all the stones were hewn, squared, and polished for their places at some distance from the site of erection, so all the precious stones of God's celestial temple are in this world purified, formed, and adorned for the Church above. Sometimes they are subjected to painful operations to purge them from sin. "Fiery trials," afflictive dispensations, persecutions, and generally the influences of the Spirit. To this refining process, Job was subjected, Job 23 : 10 ; Mal. 3 : 3. The process may in some cases be painful, in others more gentle, but the progressive effect is delightful. The excrescences of sin are removed, and the beauties of holiness imparted. The affections are weaning from earth, and aspiring after heaven. The graces of the Spirit are flourishing in the soul, and the path has become like that of the just, "shining more and more," etc. [Amplify.]

Some jewels are long in making; but the work is carried on gradually; every day's work adds to their beauty and richness, and ultimately they are perfected.

So some of God's children require a long process to deaden them to sin, to wean them from earth, and ripen them for glory. It requires many trials, sometimes very severe dispensations to refine them from dross, and to detach them from earth. Yet God hath promised to perfect the work he has begun. He will never cease his work till he has perfected it. Phil. 1 : 6.

3. *For their brilliancy and beauty.* Jewels, in their original state, are rough, impure, and dull, but by the process of refining

and polishing, they become exceedingly bright and splendid. They are susceptible of a polish which causes their inherent beauties to shine forth and dazzle the eye; and some are so brilliant and sparkling as to reflect a radiance in the dark.

So the Lord's jewels, washed from their sins and guilt by the precious blood of Christ, regenerated and adorned by the power and graces of the Spirit, shine as "lights in the world," to illuminate its dark moral atmosphere, and to lead men from the regions of death to the light of heaven. How bright and intelligent their minds compared with their former state of ignorance! How different their conduct to what it once was! How lovely and beautiful the career of the true Christian, compared with that of the wicked, who frequently degrade themselves lower than the brute creation! Arrayed in the robe of righteousness, and having the mind of Christ, how beautiful and lovely they appear! — For this they are indebted to grace. See Ezek. 16 : 6-14, *cum multis*. They are not perfect, but, like the sun, they have some spots in their conduct; but these they confess to God, and ask for more grace, that the sanctifying and beautifying process may go on. Here they shine amid much infirmity; but they are gradually ripening for heaven, where they will have "neither spot nor wrinkle, nor any such thing." Their bodies will be changed and glorified — united to their souls in perfect light and glory, surpassing the brightness of the meridian sun.

4. *For their beautiful variety.* Precious stones greatly vary in color, quality, and in value. Some are white, clear, pellucid like water. Hence a diamond of this nature is called a diamond of the first water. Some are red, or brown, blue, green, black, and yellow, with an endless variety of shade, mixture, fineness, hardness, and size.

And the Lord's jewels are greatly diversified. They are varied in their gifts and graces, in their tempers and dispositions, in their talents, etc. One is courageous, another is timorous; one is strong, another is weak in faith; one is zealous, another is cold and lifeless; one burns with love, another mourns its deficiency; one is full of hope, another is despondent; one has five talents, another only one. And while all possess the graces of the Spirit in degree, we shall find that one is eminent for this, and another eminent for that. Abraham was eminent for faith, Moses for meekness, Joshua for valor, Job for patience, David for devotion, Isaiah for sublimity, Jeremiah for sympathy, Daniel for courageous faith, James for discretion, Paul for zeal, and John for love. Look into the Church and see. Such a variety gives beauty to the Church.

5. *Jewels are highly ornamental*, and, therefore, persons fond of appearance attach them to their dress, or some part of the body. They are placed in rings, seals, stomachers, and crowns, which adorn the hands, arms, breast, head, etc. The breast-plate of the high-priest under the law was thus adorned. See Ex. 28 : 15-28. The same may be said of his ephod, v. 6-9.

So believers, as jewels, are "the glory of Christ." See 2 Cor. 8 : 23 ;

Isa. 62 : 3. They are called Hephzibah, the Lord delighteth in thee. No prince sets a higher value on his crown and jewels than God does on his people. Like the Jewish High-priest, the Lord has engraven the names of his people on his heart, on the palms of his hands, Isa. 49 : 15. The engraving of their names indicates his firm and perpetual love, memorial, esteem, and preservation of them. "Set me as a signet upon thy heart, as a signet upon thine arm;" Song, 8 : 6. Christians honor and glorify God by their devotedness to his service—by glorying in his cross, and having no confidence in the flesh. — When they enter heaven they cast their crowns at his feet. — At the day of judgment, Christ will come to be "glorified in his saints," etc. And in heaven they will be the ransomed of his blood, the trophies of his grace, the gems and the jewels to bestud his royal diadem forever and ever. — Saints are compared to jewels,

6. *For their scarcity.* They are to be found only in a few places. Comparatively they are confined to a few persons; to the wealthy and the noble, to princes and kings. Their scarcity makes them valuable, and the objects of desire.

So the people of God have always been few in number. In the patriarchal age, at the time of the deluge, etc.; in the days of Christ, and in subsequent ages, the Church is found to be only "a little flock." Separate from their number mere professors, formalists, and hypocrites; compare the remnant with the great mass of ungodly people on the face of the earth, and it will be seen that the jewels of the Lord are limited in number. — But the Church shall increase. The time shall come when the jewels of the Lord shall be numerous as the drops of the morning dew.

7. Jewels are *highly prized and carefully preserved.* Silver and gold are valuable, but jewels are more highly prized. Some even idolize them. They will part with anything before them. The loss of them has ever been regarded as a great calamity. Therefore they are carefully preserved to the last. We have read of nobles and princes deprived of their dignity and reduced to necessitous circumstances, who might have bettered their condition by disposing of their jewels at an immense price, but so greatly have they esteemed them that they have retained them with the greatest tenacity.

So Jehovah highly esteems his jewels, and he will also preserve them. John 17 : 12. True, they possess nothing excellent of themselves; but they are God's workmanship, the trophies of his grace, and the vessels of his mercy. See how he expresses his love for his ancient people, Deut. 7 : 6-8. And also in Ex. 19 : 5, and Ps. 135 : 4, where the word jewel is translated "treasure," implying not only costly gems, but all valuable possessions. But the word "jewels" is not an improper translation; for it intimates that God's esteem for his people is infinitely greater than the esteem which men have for the most valuable of all their possessions, even their jewels.

That God highly esteems his people, and will preserve them, think of the covenant of mercy he made on their behalf—of the amazing

price paid for their salvation—of his creative energy to form them after, and for himself—of all the arrangements of his providence—and the influences of his Spirit.—It appears also from the charge he gives to the wicked, 1 Chron. 16 : 21, 22. “They that touch them touch the apple of mine eye.” He pities them as a father pities his children. He punishes their enemies; he gives his angels charge over them; he overshadows them with the wings of his mercy; he is their refuge, their hiding-place, the pavilion of their safety, the rock and shield of their defence. They are the crown-jewels of the Lord, and they shall never perish, etc. And as nobles and princes place their jewels in a cabinet for a future occasion, so the Lord, when his people die, places their ransomed spirits in heaven, that rich, glorious, and immortal cabinet, created and prepared for the beloved of his soul, his peculiar treasure, his choice and goodly jewels.

8. Jewels are *frequently counterfeited*. That which is not silver or gold, but mere alloy; that which is not a diamond, or a pearl, or a ruby, may be only glass, or some other composition of materials ingeniously wrought by imitative art; so that their apparent resemblance may deceive the unskilful and unwary.

So the Church is frequently deceived by those who “are not of them,” who become troublers in Israel, and eventually discover themselves, or are detected, and “go out from them.” Some enter the Church from mere excitement, but have not the root of the matter within them. Some from mercenary motives; but as they have not been extracted from the quarry of nature, and polished by the Divine artist, they will soon lose their assumed lustre, their superficial polish. Trials, reproof, Church discipline, will unmask them, and exhibit them as counterfeit jewels.—Some enter the Church to display their talents; loudly they talk, and much they display themselves. Great is their eloquence, and much are they admired. (It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.) But when their power is expended, and their excitement dies, they will stand forth in their real character—as counterfeit jewels. “All are not Israel who are called Israel.” Take heed, therefore, to your conduct. We cannot deceive God. He knows us; he searches the heart. “Search me, O God,” etc.

Lastly. Jewels are *frequently exhibited* by their possessors to their friends and guests, to indicate their wealth and honor, and to excite their admiration.

At the day of judgment, the jewels of the Lord shall be gathered together from all parts of the universe. They will appear at his bar, be placed at his right hand, distinct from the goats on his left. They will be perfect then, body and soul glorified, resembling the glorified body of Christ, bearing the image of the heavenly, shining forth as the sun did in the firmament, and as the stars forever and ever. Behold them there! Their countless multitude, their unspotted purity, their joy unspeakable, and full of glory. All earthly glories have faded before them. Angels view them with rapture. Demons regard them with envy, while Christ proclaims to the universe, “These are my jewels!”—“Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom pre-

pared for you before the foundation of the world!" Come, take your palms, tune your harps, and wear your crowns forever!

"Come to the land of the cherubim,
Come to the land of the seraphim,
Come to the hills by immortals trod,
Come where the pure in heart see God.

"We come, O God, we come to thee,
Gems in thy crown ordained to be;
We come, for thy grace has made us meet,
To cast our crowns before thy feet.

"They enter that land of pellucid gold,
Whose glory and grandeur can ne'er be told;
Raptures of triumph fill the place
Shouted by jewels saved by grace."

XVI. — SALVATION WITH ETERNAL GLORY.

"The salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." — 2 TIM. 2 : 10.

SALVATION by grace is the most valuable blessing that can be enjoyed by man. — It was so regarded by all the sacred writers: by the patriarchs who apprehended it by faith; by the prophets who were inspired to predict it; by angels who announced it, sang their songs of ecstasy over it, and who ever "desire to look into it;" by Jesus Christ who purchased it; by Jehovah who formed the plan, and sent his Son to execute it; by the Apostles and martyrs who preached it, defended it, and shed their blood for it; by all believers who have tasted its riches, and by all glorified saints whom it has elevated to heaven. — In the context, Paul declares that his profession of Christ, as an apostle, subjected him to trouble and bonds, v. 9, 10; nevertheless, he counted them as nothing for the elect's sake. — It is Christianity alone that can inspire such a spirit, and give such an example to the world.

I. THE NECESSITY OF SALVATION.

Salvation, in a temporal sense, implies deliverance from some danger, calamity, death, or ruin. The Psalmist applies it to the deliverance of the children of Israel from the tyranny of Pharaoh. Ps. 106 : 8-10. "So he was their Saviour." Isa. 63 : 8, 9. Such also was the deliverance of Noah, Lot, and that from Babylonish captivity, etc.

In the New Testament, the word salvation means deliverance from spiritual and everlasting ruin. "Even Jesus who delivered us from the wrath to come." — All the terms descriptive of salvation, as redemption, saved, reconciliation, deliverance, etc., imply a state of danger, ruin, misery, and exposure to future wrath, in which the sinner is involved. Hence salvation is necessary.

Sin is the cause of this danger and ruin. Sin expelled our people from paradise; it destroyed their communion with God.

—and whatever punishment, misery, and ruin came upon individuals subsequently, the cause was sin.

It has been the cause of all *natural evil*, as sickness, human frailty, corporeal death. It has been the cause of all *moral and spiritual evil*. The image of God is defaced from the soul — the mind is alienated from him; the affections are corrupted; the understanding is darkened; the heart is hardened; the will is stubborn; and the course of action, and the thoughts of the heart are only evil, and that continually. And what is the prospect of the sinner without God? It is “the blackness of darkness forever,” for “the wages of sin is death.”

2. As a practical transgressor, man is in a state of condemnation. He is a transgressor of God’s holy law. “All have sinned,” etc. Rom. 3 : 19, 23. And none are exempt from these charges.

Some may boast of their moral virtues, of their native goodness, of the excellent quality of their hearts, but let them explore the inmost recesses of their souls, and they will find sin in their affections, in their desires, in their purposes, etc. — The law is so spiritual, that it condemns the desires and purposes of the soul, as well as the actions of the life. All sin is hateful to God, and he declares that it shall not go unpunished. The threatenings, the woes, and the anguish, denounced against transgression, loudly proclaim the necessity of salvation.

3. Salvation cannot be procured by *human acts or inventions*. Can a finite being, defiled, condemned, and the subject of infinite demerit, perform anything to regain the Divine favor? Can he annihilate danger and evil which are infinite? No, for the Gospel sweeps away all human devisings, when contemplating the infinite power of the only Saviour, by declaring, “Neither is there salvation in any other.” 1 Cor. 3 : 11.

II. THE SOURCE OF SALVATION : “In Christ Jesus.”

Salvation is in Christ Jesus, —

1. *By designation and promise*. God foreseeing the ruin of man, appointed him before the foundation of the world was laid, to be the Saviour of sinners. “The lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” Rev. 13 : 8. The sacrifice of Christ to procure this salvation, was “according to the eternal purpose which Jehovah purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Eph. 3 : 11.

From the earliest time he was so promised; “The seed of the woman,” etc. Gen. 3 : 15. — All the types, sacrifices, and shadows proclaimed him as the Saviour. All Christians expected him as such. Salvation prospectively by him was the joy of the ancient Church.

2. *By qualification*. The constitution of his person. Divine. Human. Both combined. He was God, the true God, and eternal life. He was man, truly and properly man. By the latter he could die as a sacrifice, and the former invested that sacrifice with an infinitude of merit.

3. *All his names and offices imply salvation*. “Christ Jesus”

the anointed Saviour. The same as Messiah. Ps. 45 : 7; Isa. 61 : 1.

Anciently priests and kings were consecrated to office by the ceremony of unction with perfumed oil. But Christ was anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power. John 3 : 32-34; Luke 4 : 18. He was anointed to be a prophet, priest, and king. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus." Matt. 1 : 21. [Amplify.]

4. *Salvation is in his sacrificial death.* He died that sinners might live; he endured the curse for guilty men, that they might be blessed forever. "Who himself bare our sins," etc. He is now exhibited as the Divine Substitute, Surety, and Ransomer, Propitiation, Atonement, etc. See Rom. 3 : 25; Eph. 1 : 7; Col. 1 : 14; 1 Pet. 1 : 19; Rev. 5 : 9, etc.

5. *In his resurrection.* This gave validity to his sacrifice, and became the pledge and earnest of his people's resurrection. "And if Christ be not risen," etc. 1 Cor. 15 : 14. "Who was delivered," Rom. 4 : 25.

There is salvation too in his *intercession*. "If any man sin," etc. "He ever liveth," etc.

6. *Salvation is dispensed by him.* He delivers those who apply to him. He saves those ready to perish when they come to him. Hence he said, "If any man thirst," etc., John 7 : 37; "Come unto me, all ye that labor," etc. "The water that I shall give him," John 4 : 14. "I give unto my sheep," etc., John 10 : 28.

III. THE NATURE OF SALVATION.

1. It is salvation *from all guilt*. "Be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee." See Eph. 1 : 7. Peter declares the same thing. Acts 13 : 38. The design of the Gospel ministry, Acts 25 : 18. Sins numerous—long continued—the most enormous, the blackest guilt, can be forgiven through the efficiency of Christ's blood, 1 John 1 : 7, 9.

2. It is salvation *from all condemnation*. Acts 13 : 39; Rom. 5 : 1; 8 : 1.

This is more than forgiveness; for being free from guilt, and clothed with a Divine righteousness, he is accounted holy; free from all law-charges, and none can condemn him. Rom. 8 : 33.

3. Salvation from the *domination or power of sin*. Being regenerated, or made new, by the Spirit of Christ, he hates sin, he avoids it, and he receives grace to resist it. Rom. 6 : 1, 2, 13, 14, 22.

4. *It implies adoption.* Salvation from the society of the wicked, to companionship with the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty, Gal. 3 : 26; 1 John 3 : 1.

5. It implies the enjoyment of *all privileges and blessings* flowing from salvation. Intercourse with God, fellowship with saints, ordinances, Divine protection and preservation, the influences of the Spirit, etc.

This is the salvation of Christ. It is *free*, unmerited, undeserved. It

is by grace, Eph. 2 : 8 ; Titus 3 : 4, 5 ; it is *complete* ; it does all for the soul which the soul needs ; it must first be enjoyed on earth, or it cannot be enjoyed in eternity. It is *eternal*, as the following remarks will show :

IV. SALVATION ON EARTH IS SUCCEEDED BY ETERNAL GLORY IN HEAVEN. "With eternal glory."

Salvation enjoyed on earth is replete with blessedness, and joy, and hope ; yet great as it is, rich and exquisite as its pleasures are, it is only the precursor of that which is everlasting ; it is but the earnest of the unfading inheritance ; it is only a drop from the ocean of salvation in heaven ; it is but the first fruits of the eternal harvest. "The salvation — with eternal glory." It is but a cluster of grapes from the heavenly Canaan, as a specimen to the soul, of the abundant, exhilarating, and satisfying nature of the vintage of immortality ; and those clusters reached down from heaven by the hand of faith, sometimes cause the Christian to say,

I have tasted Canaan's grapes,
And now I long to go,
Where the Lord his vineyard keeps,
And where the clusters grow.

The word "glory" is expressive of everything grand, noble, honorable, rich, great, happy, etc. In its application to heaven, it implies this, and much more abundantly. Glory, connected with salvation, implies,

1. *Union of body and soul by a glorious resurrection.* Salvation will not be complete till that period, Rom. 8 : 11 ; 1 Cor. 15 ; Phil. 3 : 20, *cum multis*.
2. *Introduction into heaven, the habitation of God.* John 14 : 2, 3 ; 17 : 24 ; 2 Pet. 1 : 11.
3. *Vision of Deity ;* 1 John 3 : 2 ; Ps. 17 : 15.
4. *Entire freedom from sin, and its consequences,* Rev. 21 : 27. *Perfect purity* — no affliction — no sorrow, Rev. 7 : 15–17 ; 21 : 4.
5. *Companionship with heavenly intelligences.*
6. *Progressive improvement and happiness.*
7. All crowned with *endless perpetuity.*

XVII.—EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION WORTHY OF REGARD.

"Come, and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul."—Ps. 66 : 16.

RELIGION is not a formal gloomy thing. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." The sinner views religion through a false medium, a corrupt

and distorted mind—a mind enraptured and carried away by the pleasures of sense. The sinner, by his hatred of spiritual things, and by wilful unbelief, has never permitted God to operate on his soul, and therefore he knows nothing about the transforming and gladdening influence of Divine grace, and has nothing pleasing and honorable to declare about his soul.——Alas! if he could “declare” its passions so corrupt, its thoughts so wicked, its accusations so alarming, its anger, its malice, and envy, and all the workings of inbred depravity, the declaration would be terrific, and cause us to say, Art thou a man, or a demon? But while “the heart of a sinner is little worth,” Prov. 10: 20, the heart of the Christian can utter abundantly the memory of God’s great goodness. —— “Come and hear,” etc.

I. THE NATURE OF EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION. It consists in knowing what God has done for the soul.

In the context the Psalmist refers to some benefits which God had conferred on him and the Church, viz.: *Deliverance* from enemies, v. 5, 6, alluding to the successful escape of the Israelites from the pursuit of Pharaoh, Ex. 14; hence he triumphs, v. 12. *Preserving power*, v. 9. *Beneficial affliction*, v. 10, 11. The *answering* of prayer, v. 19, 20.

And what are the dealings of God with his people now? What can the believer “declare?”

1. He has made me *the subject of his grace*. For me he devised the plan of redemption; sent his Son to execute it. He loved me, and gave himself for me.——He convinced me of sin, and of my need of the Saviour. He wrought in me repentance and faith. He enables me to rest my imperishable Spirit on the finished work of Christ, and in consequence I now have,

- (1.) Freedom from guilt. (2.) Freedom from all law-charges.
(3.) Peace. Rom. 5: 1.

Christ is my Prophet and he has given me light. He is my Priest, and he has died and atoned for me; he ever liveth to make intercession for me. He is my Physician, and he has healed my soul. He is my King, and he has subjugated my heart; he rules me with the sceptre of his grace, and delivers me from the domination of sin and the Wicked One.


2. He has done for my soul *that which neither I, nor any one else could do*. Can the dead raise themselves to life? “Can the Ethiopian change his skin?” etc.—Salvation is of grace, Eph. 2: 4–10. “Not unto me, O Lord,” etc.

3. He has *regenerated my soul and adopted me into his family*. I have a name better than that of sons and daughters, for I am a child of God, Gal. 4: 4–7. I am allied to the saints on earth, and to perfected spirits in glory. I am allied to angels. I am a participant in all Divine privileges—blessed with all spiritual blessings, etc.

4. *He has chastened me*. From necessity; to purge me from the *filth of sin*; to wean me from the world; to draw me to himself. *He has chastened me wisely*; at first I thought it hard and severe, but the

effect proves his wisdom. He has done it all in love; very tenderly; at first I thought he was becoming mine enemy; but now I find that the rod was wielded by the hand of Divine love. Heb. 6: 6. etc. "Before I was afflicted," etc.

5. *He has comforted me.* By delivering me from dangers and snares; by preventing me from falling, and preserving me from the state of the wicked. He has comforted me at his throne, in his house, and by his word and Spirit.

 Sometimes God signally and extraordinarily blesses and delivers his people. Such instances ought to be declared. How often has he appeared in extreme temporal suffering—in times of persecution! etc.

6. *He has prepared heaven for me, as my everlasting home, and he is preparing me for it.* John 14: 2, 3.


II. THAT EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION WILL BE MANIFEST AND DECLARED. "I will declare," etc.

It is natural to the soul to tell its joys, Luke 15: 6, 9. The Christian life is a hidden one with respect to its principles and spring, but visible by its fruits and effects. Those who truly receive the Gospel, "hold forth the word of life," as living "epistles, known and read of all men." "Out of the abundance of the heart too, the mouth is compelled to speak."—That which God has done for the soul,

1. *Will be declared in prayer.* Then the believer acknowledges to the Father of mercies, in the presence of his brethren, what he has done for his soul. He praises him for pardoning mercy, for deliverance, for strength, for Divine interpositions, etc. etc.

2. *By conversation.* "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another," etc. Mal. 3: 16. This is a duty sadly neglected. When professors of religion come together, how seldom is Christ allowed to be with them! And yet nothing should be more natural and pleasant than to talk of what God has done for the soul. Travellers, voyagers, frequently speak together about their journey or voyage; its trials, difficulties, termination, etc.

3. *It should be done socially.* Times and places should be appointed for prayer and the relation of Christian experience.

 Such declarations should be made *sincerely*, they should be in language prompted by *real* experience—without hypocrisy, imposture—with the greatest humility.

III. THAT THE DECLARATION OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE IS INTERESTING. And if so, it ought to be respected and regarded.

Hence the Biography of the Bible, and of Martyrs, Christians, Ministers, and Missionaries, is so interesting. Their Christian experience is recorded, and they, being dead, yet speak, saying, "Come and hear," etc.

There is a universal sympathy between all who love God—the happiness of one is the gratification of all. They who have been delivered from the wrath to come, are glad to hear others declare

that they too are delivered by the same grace. It is a declaration which makes even angels rejoice, Luke 15 : 10.

But observe, 1. That the declaration of Christian experience can only be interesting to those who "fear God," Mal. 3 : 16. Not to the formal—the mere professor.

2. That this declaration proclaims the Divine goodness. "O come taste and see that the Lord is good!"

3. It honors God and abases man.

4. It encourages the weak and feeble saint.

5. It shows the gladdening, elevating, and vital nature of religion.

6. The declaration of Christian experience will be the grand employment of the Church triumphant.

APPLICATION.

1. *Humility.* How little have we to say about the operations of grace! How barren and unfruitful! "When for the time we ought to have been teachers," etc. How few have we gladdened by our "declaring what God has done for our souls"!

2. *Reproof.* Instead of talking about spiritual matters, have we not preferred other subjects—trade, politics, mere news, mere twaddle, tales, etc.?

3. *Repentance.* It is high time to awake out of sleep. Eternity is at hand. Shall soon have done with the trifles of earth. Go to the cross. Become God's workmanship there; then go and tell what a Saviour you have found.

XVIII.—THE HEART OF THE WICKED WORTHLESS.

"The heart of the wicked is little worth." — PROV. 10 : 20.

THERE are different degrees of wickedness. Some are naturally kind, benevolent, and affable; but all are depraved in heart, notwithstanding their natural superiority to others. And such persons whom the Spirit has caused to "know the plague of their own hearts," have conceded the fact that the heart, while unrenewed, is little worth, having in it little substantial good towards God or man. Solomon was an accurate observer, a profound philosopher, and his language must be regarded as correct. The heart of the wicked is little worth,

1. *Because it is depraved.* It was made pure; it was made in the image of God. It has been marred by sin. The fountain of moral action has become filthy, and the streams which it sends forth are filthy also. It is a broken instrument; it is a fractured

machine ; it is a desert soul, that yields no revenue of praise and glory to God, Gen. 6 : 5 ; 8 : 21. Affections defiled, language corrupt, etc.

II. *It is a rebellious heart.* It has not only forsaken God, but resisted him, defied him, and trampled on the righteous laws of heaven. The heart of man is most decidedly opposed and hostile to the will of heaven. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." Disobedience and transgression flow from the heart.

III. *It is the source* not only of ordinary evil, but of the foulest crimes. There can be no bounds set to the heart so little worth, except by the grace of God. In spite of moral training, religious example, education, parental inculcation, the depraved heart, so little worth, has prompted the most tragical and diabolical deeds. Witness oppression, thefts, war, plunder, rapine, murder, etc. What is the heart of a covetous man worth? — The heart of a miser, the heart of a drunkard — the heart of a debauchee, or libertine — the heart of a gambler, etc.

IV. *It is deceitful.* Jer. 17 : 9. It deceives the owner. Things evil it calls good ; things dangerous it represents as safe or harmless ; it is as deceitful as Satan himself, who presents the golden bait, and hides the hook. It is full of craft, policy, cunning, fraud, and hypocrisy. It deceives others. One is a greater adept in wickedness than another, and he deceives the unwary, the weak, the ignorant. It is little worth. Who values a deceitful man?

V. *It is capable of perpetrating deeds it seems to deprecate.* As in the case of Hazael, 2 Kings 8 : 13 ; and in the case of Peter, Matt. 26 : 33. The denouncers of evil have often through the deceitfulness of the heart, fallen into the same evils they have denounced.

VI. *It is insensible, hard,* and sometimes *cruel,* and *inhuman.* Afflictions, affecting dispensations, death, judgment, eternity affect it little, it is so hard and insensible. — And it is cruel and inhuman. What atrocious acts has it committed ! "Without natural affection." A heart productive of so much misery can be little worth.

VII. *It is worthless when compared with the heart renewed by the Spirit.* The heart of the Christian produces good. They are the light, the regenerators of the world. All the noble institutions designed to ameliorate the condition of man, have been established by Christians. — Where are the benevolent institutions founded by the wicked, the infidel, the atheist, etc., whose hearts are little worth?

VIII. *It rejects the Divine Remedy provided to make it valuable.* "The heart of the wicked is fully set in them to do evil." "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life."

IX. *The heart of the wicked will be found worthless at the day of judgment.* See Matt. 25 : 41–46.

Then they will appear as "reprobates," as "castaways." "Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them." Jer. 6 : 30. It will then appear that "God gave them over to a repro-

bate mind." Rom. 1 : 28. They will be "the tares" then, Matt. 13 : 40; the "chaff" to be burned with fire. Matt. 3 : 12.

APPLICATION.

1st. What a mercy it is that the Gospel still invites the wicked to be saved! "Let the wicked." etc. Isa. 55.

2d. They are deceived who trust in the goodness of their hearts. Without regeneration it is but little worth.

3d. Pray for enlightening and sanctifying grace. "Create within me, O God, a clean heart," etc.

XIX.—THE LOVING-KINDNESS OF GOD BETTER THAN LIFE.

"Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee."—Ps. 63 : 3.

WHAT a mean opinion some men form of spiritual enjoyment! That which is delightful and enrapturing to the Christian is dull and gloomy to the sinner. The Apostle Paul states the reason of this difference, 1 Cor. 2 : 14. — How different was the estimate which the Psalmist formed of the loving-kindness of God! "It is better than life." He entertained this opinion in the wilderness, where he wrote this Psalm, and he made the same estimate when he occupied the throne of Israel. It is better than a life of adversity, affliction, and persecution, for it supports the mind to bear them; it is better than my sceptre, my crown, my throne, my kingdom, and my empire with all its honors and wealth. These will pass away, but the loving-kindness of God shall endure longer than the sun — endure forever. It shall place in my hand an unfading palm, on my head the crown of endless life, etc. — "It is better than life." Hence David so frequently dwells upon this interesting subject throughout the Psalms.

I. THE LOVING-KINDNESS OF GOD.

The loving-kindness of God is that gracious affection which he manifests to his creatures, not only in the blessings of creation and providence, but especially in the covenant of grace. There is something *peculiar* in the term; not merely *kindness* which he shows to all men, in supplying their wants, causing his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, etc., Matt. 5 : 45; but it is **LOVING-KINDNESS**, a term of endearment, borrowed from the various relationships of life: as existing between parents and children, "Like as a father," etc. His love is more tender and sympathetic than that of a mother, Isa. 66 : 13; Isa. 49 : 14-16. He is "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" — "a brother born for adversity." It is a love greater and more tender than that subsisting between husbands and wives, Hosea 2 : 19; Eph. 5 : 25-27. It is a term expressive of kindness, unparalleled, infinite, and which no one else can manifest. See Isa. 63 : 7. — Consider,

1st. *Its Manifestation.* Manifested by God. It caused him to devise and arrange the covenant of redemption—to give his Son for the life of sinners—it brought the Son of God from the Father's bosom, subjected him to tabernacle on earth—allied him to humanity; and all its sorrows, conducted him as a sacrifice to the cross, where he endured the wrath of God due to guilty man. "He that spareth not his own Son," etc. "God so loved the world," etc.

Thus the loving-kindness of God, in the substitution of Christ for man, became the source of salvation, of absolution of sin, deliverance from spiritual bondage, and of a full and gracious acceptance with God. — This manifestation was marvellous indeed, if we consider the infinite dignity of the Divine Sufferer, the vast unworthiness of the objects of his love, and the infinite and everlasting blessedness which that love purchased. No human mind can fully conceive the riches and glory of this loving-kindness: no human tongue can describe it in its length and breadth, etc. Human language, with all its expressive figures, is insufficient here. "God SO loved the world." There is an eternity of meaning in that word SO.

2d. *Its powerful influence.* It converts men to God. It enlightens the mind; it convinces of sin; it melts the heart; it produces contrition, and leads to faith; it regenerates the soul; gives an interest in Christ, and consecrates a man to God.

It has converted the most obdurate, as Saul of Tarsus, the filthy Corinthians, the idolatrous Ephesians, the wicked Magdalene, and the reviling malefactor. It has made the worst members of society the most useful to the world, causing them to love the saints whom they formerly wished to murder, and to preach the faith which they sought to destroy. Hence Paul said, "God is my witness how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Christ Jesus." Rom. 9: 1, etc.

It is the most powerful motive to Christian zeal and activity. "For the love of Christ constraineth us." It caused Apostles to labor, suffer, and die for Christ, and martyrs to give their bodies to the flames. It made dungeons pleasant, and stakes and scaffolds welcome.

3d. *Its rich and comprehensive import.* "God is love," and this loving-kindness summons, collects, and concentrates all the attributes of the Deity for the comfort, happiness, and sustentation of the Church. It exhibits all the purposes of Jehovah, and all the arrangements of the covenant of grace for perishing sinners. It includes all the events of Divine Providence for the good of the saved; all the influences of the Holy Spirit, enlightening, quickening, comforting, and sealing the soul; all the guardianship and care of the Almighty Shepherd; all the promises; all the ordinances; the hope of endless life, and endless life itself. Of his fulness we receive, even grace for grace. His loving-kindness fills with the fulness of God.

4th. *Its duration.* It is not confined to earth, nor bounded by time. Death cannot destroy it; the grave cannot entomb it. It will survive the disruption of all earthly ties, flourish at the resurrection of the just, and yield its immortalizing influence when time shall

be swallowed up in eternity. "Thy mercy, O God, is from everlasting to everlasting, upon all those that fear thee."

Even in this respect, by its duration, it "is better than life." "Thy effusive mercy is better than life, or *lives*. It is better than, and good beyond countless ages of, human existence." It will survive all things. "Because I live, ye shall live also." "Might have everlasting life." "And this is the record that God hath given us, even eternal life."

II. THE GLORIOUS PROPERTY OF THIS LOVING-KINDNESS. "It is better than life."

Such a declaration cannot be made by the wicked, nor by the formalist, or mere professor of religion. With many the world is all: they idolize it, and dread death to end their enjoyment of it. Such an estimate as this, "better than life," can only be made by the man who is deeply experienced in the loving-kindness of God. He is *acquainted* with it, he has *an interest* in it, and he *hopes*, through *grace*, to *enjoy it forever*. Such only can say, "It is better than life."

1st. It is better than life because *it makes the life honorable* which otherwise would have been base and ignoble. It calls from darkness to light; from the practice and defilement of sin, to the practice of piety and the beauties of holiness. It plants in the soul the *graces* of the Spirit, and these adorn the life. Therefore, a life of holiness is better than a life of impurity.

2d. It makes the life *useful and profitable*, which otherwise would have been unprofitable, if not destructive. There is no profit in sin. A sinner is not a useful member of society in a moral and spiritual sense. "One sinner destroyeth much good." How useful is the true Christian!——Philemon, 10: 11. It makes a man "to do good, to communicate," etc.

3d. *It sanctifies and dignifies life*. Its *possessions and property*. Some have these, but they are unsanctified and misappropriated. The heart is riveted to them, and the hand holds them with a firm grasp. When they lose these, they lose their gods. But the loving-kindness of God causes the Christian to say, "These comforts, these enjoyments, this wealth, this estate, and this prosperity, are the gifts of Providence. They are not mine; they are the Lord's, and I will not abuse them. As far as I can I will consecrate them to his glory. While I thank God for them, I will not set my heart upon them. They are fleeting things. I too must soon quit them. My hope is in God. 'Whom have I in heaven but thee?'" etc.

It dignifies the relationships of life, making courteous, pitiful, kind.——It dignifies the pursuits of life—secular transactions are characterized by honor and justice. The golden rule is observed, and the righteous in this sense is more excellent than his neighbor. If we look into society, we shall find many miserable, though surrounded with good. Some evil temper, pride, or anger, or covetousness, preys on their spirits, and renders them unhappy. They are out at sea, without rudder, or compass, or pilot. They want the loving-kindness of God to calm the troubled ocean of life, and steer their vessels safely.

4th. *It is an antidote to all the sorrows of life.* Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. Trouble arising from a frail and dying body—from bereavements, the loss of some dear friend or relative—from reverses in trade—from the unkindness or treachery of man. If not in trouble now, it will surely come. The clouds are gathering.

What must alleviate these sorrows; what must sweeten our bitter cup? The loving-kindness of God, which says, "I afflict thee from necessity. I do it in love. It will yield a rich revenue of good to thee. I will sweeten thy bitter cup, and superintend its operation. The issue shall be glorious." "All things shall work together for good," etc. — Thus the Divine loving-kindness opens the eyes of the believer; he sees God in the clouds; he beholds him in the burning-bush; he traces him in the fiery furnace. It opens his ear, and a soothing voice is heard by him amid the storms of adversity, saying, "It is I; be not afraid." Thus the bitter becomes sweet, the darkness light and pleasant. The bitter cup is submissively taken and drunk. "The will of the Lord be done."

5th. *It makes up the deficiencies of life.* Life, however prized and loved, is not perfect. It can never satisfy the cravings of an immortal soul. Whatever good there may be in the creature, in domestic life, in the pursuits of life, in science and philosophy, there will always be something wanting. For a confirmation of this let us ask kings.

First, David. He finds something "better,"—the loving-kindness of God. What, are you not happy and satisfied with the royalty and dignities of your life, with your magnificent palace, with your glorious throne, your refulgent crown, your mighty sceptre, your vast dominions, your numerous subjects, and your overflowing treasures of gold, silver, and all precious things? No! I am not satisfied. "The Lord is my portion." "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" etc. I am not satisfied with these fleeting things. "As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness." Secondly, ask Solomon, his son, that man of fancy, of experiment, of philosophy, and of vast wealth. Compared with the loving-kindness of God, he casts all human things into the shade, and writes this as their epitaph, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity and vexation of spirit." — And such also has been the concessions made by very many distinguished persons of opulence, of honor, and dignity. There is always something wanting.

And if you could emancipate yourselves from your present circumstances, and become extremely rich, noble, and honorable, you would still find something wanting. Nay, if you could collect all the riches, honors, and enjoyments of man from the beginning of creation to the last hour on the dial of time, and concentrate them in one mass for your enjoyment, you would not be satisfied, they would pall at length upon your appetite, and you would pant after something still higher. Could you rise from this terrestrial ball, and enter some planet, and then another, and another, there would still be something wanting. Material objects can never satisfy an immortal spirit.

What then is to supply this deficiency? Nothing but the loving-kindness of God, which gives blessings that can never end, pleasures that will never satiate, employments that will never tire, and companions who will never die. And when we enter the New Jerusalem, that which is perfect will have come. There the loving-kindness of God shall enlighten us by a sun that shall never go down, refresh us by a river of life always flowing, and adorn us with a crown that will never fade away. It has prepared for us the robes of kings, the work of angels, and the life of God. It shall, through eternity, maintain our felicity, and our increasing delight in it. — "It is better than life."

6. *It prepares the soul to surrender life* at the approach of death, and to die triumphantly in the Lord. "We must needs die," etc. In spite of every precaution, and all care, and skill, the last attack of disease will come: the time of parting with all earthly possessions, and of all endeared friends, will come: the solemn moment of death will come: the time for the utterance of the last farewell will come: the last throbbing of the pulse, and the last groan will come; the parting of the ethereal spirit and the material body, will come; the shroud and the coffin will come: the grave, and the worm, and corruption will come. All these things, so repugnant to nature, are sure to come: for "there is no man that hath power over the spirit to *retain* the spirit: neither hath he power in the day of his death, and there is no discharge in that war."

But all wish to evade death as long as they possibly can. "Not yet, not yet!" is their constant cry. They would bribe death away; they would part with all things to prolong human existence. Hence Runjeet Singh, the Maharajah of Lahore, and the owner of the Koh-i-noor diamond, when at the point of death, verified the truth of the declaration, "All that a man hath will he give for his life." Though that diamond was then valued at two million pounds sterling, yet he offered to give it to his spiritual adviser, if he could, by his intercession, prolong his existence. But, alas! the earthly diamond had no power then. The poor wretch required a more precious gem, even the loving-kindness of God, to reconcile him to the loss of life.

And nothing else can do it. Silver and gold cannot. Rubies, still more precious, cannot do it. Your friends and companions cannot do it. Natural bravery cannot do it. Human philosophy cannot do it. Infidelity and Atheism quail then, and they cannot do it. They may sometimes *appear* to do it, when they have blunted and destroyed all natural feeling, but they can provide no remedy for death.

Where then, O where, shall we find a remedy for death? Only in the loving-kindness of God! The depth saith, "It is not in me," and the sea saith, "It is not in me." It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the splendid sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls, or of the topaz of Ethiopia; for "the price of this *loving-kindness* is above rubies," Job 28 : 15, etc.

In the moment of dissolution, the Divine loving-kindness supported David, Ps. 23 : 4; and all the "righteous" ever since, for they "have

hope in their death." It caused Simeon to triumph, "Lord, now lettest thou," etc. It made Paul valiant in the prospect of martyrdom; "What mean ye to weep," etc. Acts 20 : 22-25; 21 : 13. Yes, this Divine loving-kindness assures the Christian that for him Christ unstinged death, and deprived the grave of its power; that he will be with him in death, which shall be his gain; that angels shall transport his soul to the skies; that his body shall be raised and glorified after the fashion of Christ's glorified body.—Thus it is "better than life," for it *substitutes a better life* than that of our earthly existence.

III. THAT THIS LOVING-KINDNESS SHOULD PRODUCE PRAISE. "My lips shall praise thee."

1. *For its Source*, even Christ. Thou gavest thy Son to be the life of men. He suffered death for me. Through him I am saved, and have everlasting life.

2. *For the application of it to my soul*. Once I knew it not. I was in darkness, dead in trespasses and sins. But the Spirit revealed this loving-kindness to my heart. I now feel it to be better than life, sweetening its bitters, etc.

3. *For the hope* that I entertain of realizing the benefits of this loving-kindness forever.

4. My praise shall be *heartfelt and sincere*.

5. It shall be *private*, as I think about it, and *public* when I hear it proclaimed. I will sing thy praises with the congregations of thy people.

6. My praise shall be *practical*. I will devote myself to thy glory. I will proclaim thy love. I will strive to bring others to the knowledge of it.

And when time with me shall be no more, the praises of my lips on earth will be succeeded by the praises of eternity.

I'll praise my Maker while I've breath;
And when my voice is lost in death,
Praise shall employ my nobler powers:
My days of praise shall ne'er be past,
While life, and thought, and being last,
Or immortality endures.

XX.—SINNERS ADMONISHED TO RETURN TO GOD.

"Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers."—JER. 35 : 15.

GOD desires not the death of a sinner. To save men from present and eternal ruin, he appointed Christ as the mediator. He has sent his servants to proclaim this mercy, and to invite sinners to return to the enjoyment of his favor. — So it was in the time of Jeremiah. The Israelites were a rebellious people; but he "sent his servants the pro-

phets, rising up early." v. 15.—And what is the design of the Gospel ministry now? It is "to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God," etc. Acts 26: 18.

I. WHAT THE EXHORTATION PRESUPPOSES.

1. That there has been a *departure from God*. "Return ye." They had departed from the truth of God's word—from the pure worship of God to the worship of idols—from trust and confidence in him—and from the practice of piety and holiness. Sin, therefore, is a departure from God. Backsliding comes on gradually.

2. This departure is *universal*. "Every man." "For all have sinned." etc. Rom. 3: 10, 19, 23.

3. This departure is *flagrantly wicked*. "Evil way." Evil in its nature: for it is committed against God, the Fountain of goodness, love, and purity. It defies the power and wisdom of God.—Evil in its influence. It darkens the mind. It debases it. It corrupts others. It injures society.—Evil in its consequences. It leads to ruin in this world, and to perdition in the world to come. "Sin when it is finished bringeth forth death."

II. THE NATURE OF THE EXHORTATION. "Return," etc.

The Exhortation implies,

1. Deep *conviction* of the evil and dangerous nature of a wicked career. Without such a conviction, salvation can never be enjoyed. Such a sensibility is the foundation of all vital godliness. Why are there so many formal and apathetic professors? Because conviction of sin has either been absent or partial.

2. *Contrition* of heart, and *confession* of sin to God. See David returning to God with penitential weeping, Ps. 51, and 38. Sin, so evil, and so disastrous in its consequences, is enough to make a sinner weep.

3. *Faith in Christ*. It is a return to God through the mediation of his Son. Hence the sinner is "reconciled unto God through Jesus Christ." See Dan. 9: 24; 2 Cor. 5: 18–20. Faith recognizes Christ as the Surety, the Sacrifice, etc.

4. The *Renunciation of every evil way*. Every evil course must be abandoned, and the sinner must apply to God for grace to enable him to "amend his doings." There will be complete reformation of conduct. "Cease to do evil," etc. True faith will produce good works. James 2: 18.

5. *Supreme love to God*. "Go not after other gods." The Israelites were often guilty of idolatry. And thousands now worship the world, the creature, wealth, honor, etc. God alone must be loved and adored.

☞ All this will lead to union with God's people. All believing penitents detached from the world, seek associates of a kindred disposition. They "give themselves first to the Lord, and then to his Church, according to his will."

III. THAT THE COMPLIANCE WITH THIS REQUEST MUST BE IMMEDIATE. "Return ye now."

Return now, because life is short and uncertain. Prov 27: 1: James **How often does the fairest flower perish in its early beauty!**

A robust constitution, a strong athletic frame, have frequently been suddenly prostrated by the relentless hand of death. Health, youth, beauty, strength, must yield to mortality's power, and often when least expected. — What a motive to "return now!"

2. Return now, because *sin is hardening and deceitful*. Conviction may be vivid, and desires strong to-day; but to-morrow, through the influence of depravity, the power of the world, and intercourse with sinners, they may decline and ultimately evaporate. Heb. 3: 7-18.

Return now, because you will *escape the greatest evils, and realize the most exalted pleasures*. You will escape guilt, condemnation, wrath, perdition. You will enjoy pardon, liberty, peace, adoption, Divine fellowship, hope, and, compared with the state of the wicked, heaven upon earth. Your "peace shall flow as a river." Isa. 48: 18. The sooner you return, the longer you will enjoy the "loving-kindness of God."

Return now, because the longer you delay *the less probability there is that you will ever return*. The lapse of every day, month, and year, renders your return less probable. How seldom do we see the aged return to God! Their passions, mental powers, and physical energies, have been expended in sinful pursuits, which expenditure, combined with depraved apathy and hardness of heart, render it next to impossible for an aged sinner to return to God. "O ye young, seek the Lord early while he may be found," etc.

5. Return now, for *the present is the only time in which we are authorized to tell you, you can be saved*. The language of ministers is, "Behold now is the accepted time," etc. They are not authorized to say, "Return to-morrow, repent next week, believe in a short time." No. Their cry is, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

IV. THE HAPPY RESULT OF RETURNING TO GOD. "Ye shall dwell in the land."

1. *The land*. The Israelites entered Canaan, and dwelt in it. It was a glorious land; a land of fertility and beauty. Deut. 8: 7.

But Canaan was a faint type of heaven, to which believers are called. Human language, with all its figures and comparisons, cannot give an adequate description of it. "Eye hath not seen," etc. Heaven is infinite, and therefore finite powers cannot describe it. The Scriptures give us a representation of it in the most endearing manner. See Rev. 21, *cum multis*.

2. It will be *the residence of God's people*. "Ye shall dwell in the land." Ye shall *rest* there — see God there — love and praise there — understand divine mysteries there — and be infinitely happy there. Ye shall dwell where there is "fulness of joy, and at God's right hand," etc. You shall be citizens of that heavenly Canaan *forever*. Your "sun shall no more go down," etc.

XXI. — PRECIOUS FAITH.

"Precious faith." — 2 PET. 1: 1.

WORLDLY men doat upon riches and honor, but the Christian possesses something infinitely more valuable, however highly they may be prized. He has "*precious faith*" in Christ, which secures him an interest in the "favor of God which is life," and in his "loving-kindness which is better than life." Earthly honors, dignities, grandeur, estates, are but fleeting vanities, and unsatisfying in their nature; man will soon be taken from them forever, or they may elude his grasp before his death. But that which "*precious faith*" gives to the Christian shall exist forever. That faith looks not at the things which are seen, which are temporal, but at the things which are not seen, which are eternal. 2 Cor. 4: 18.

The statesman may glory in his eloquence, as the instrument of his success; the legislator may glory in his wise regulations, to promote the benefit of his country; the warrior may glory in his sword, his skill and valor, as the source of his mighty achievements; the sensualist may glory in his carnal inventions and pursuits, as the only source of his enjoyment; the rich man may glory in his gold, his vast domain, his equipage of splendor, as the very fountain of his bliss: but, says the Christian, I will glory in my faith, for that faith is precious. It is more precious than rubies.

I. THE NATURE OF FAITH.

Faith implies trust and confidence in God, through Christ, for acceptance. Eph. 1: 13. This is the Gospel sense of faith; saving faith has no other interpretation. Therefore,

It is more than mere opinion, or creed; as some will say, "I belong to this sect; I am of this faith, or of that creed." Faith is a vital principle.

It is more than a mere belief that Christ is the true Messiah, though this is implied. Many thus believe, but yet they have no true faith.

It is more than believing that Christ died for sin, as a sacrifice, etc. Many believe this, yet have no true faith. — It is more than an attachment to, or defence of this truth. This may be induced by early training, education, and prejudice. Attachment to the truth can only be real, and its defence can only be efficient, when faith has its lodgment in the heart.

True faith implies,

1. *Divine enlightenment.* Knowledge is the foundation of saving faith — a knowledge of God — knowledge of our relation to him as a Divine Lawgiver — of ourselves as sinners, and as wretched and helpless before him. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee." — A knowledge of Christ in his Mediatorial character, as the Almighty Saviour, who, by his sacrifice, "made an end of sin, finished transgression, and brought in an everlasting righteousness." This enlight-

enment, produced by the Spirit, gives a perception of the adaptation of the remedy to the spiritual exigencies of the sinner; it is hailed by him with rapture, as that which alone can make him happy.

2. It implies the *renunciation of all other grounds of trust*, from a perception of their fallacy when compared with Christ. Phil. 3 : 7, 8, etc.*

3. The *full surrender of the soul to Christ to be saved*. Faith is "coming" to Christ, "beholding" him, John 1 : 29; 6 : 37; it is a participation in the satisfaction and suretyship of Christ. "He that eateth my flesh," etc. John 6 : 54-56. The believer, therefore, can say, "He loved me and gave himself for me." Gal. 2 : 20.

4. *Faith is a constant act*. It is the vital principle that actuates the Christian throughout the whole of his earthly pilgrimage. He walks by faith, prays in faith, reads and worships in faith, labors in faith, fights in faith, stands by faith, and dies triumphantly by faith. There can be no Christianity without faith.

II. THE EXCELLENCY OF FAITH. It is called "*precious faith*."

The word "precious" means valuable, of great price, costly. Faith worth a great price, and faith which cost a great price. It must be of *infinite value*, for the objects of it, spiritual blessings, were purchased by the Redeemer's blood, and it is the instrument by which the soul realizes salvation.—— Faith is precious,

1st. *As to its Author*. Consult Heb. 12 : 2; Phil. 1 : 29; John 1 : 12; 6 : 65. That which has God for its Author must be precious. It is he that "begins a good work in us." 1 Thess. 2 : 13.

2d. *As to its Object*. It rests on Christ. It depends upon the great Prophet of the Church, the atoning Priest and Intercessor, the Almighty King, the Faithful and True Witness. The faith of the Christian rests not on flesh and blood, not on sand, not on a broken reed, but on the Rock of ages, against whom the gates of hell can never prevail. How precious then must be this faith that has so firm a basis—that will support in every trial—in every season—a foundation firm and invincible!

Faith is the mountain rock,
Whose summit towers on high,
Secure above the tempest's shock,
An inmate of the sky.
Fixed on a prize of greater worth,
It views with scorn the things of earth.

Behold Christ in the dignity of his person, in the power of his grace, in the freeness of his salvation, in the expansive willingness of his heart to save, and it must be conceded that the faith which embraces him is precious. It is the infinitely valuable "treasure hid in a field," etc., Matt. 13 : 44: he is the "Pearl of Great Price." v. 46. "Unto them that believe he is precious;" invariably precious, increasingly precious, and supremely precious.

3d. It procures for the soul *the precious blessings of salvation*. The

* The Rev. David Dickson, professor of divinity in Edinburgh, being asked, when on his death-bed, how he found himself, answered, "I have taken my good deeds and bad deeds, and thrown them together in a heap, and fled from them both to Christ, and in him I have peace."

hand of faith reaches down from the cross the blessing of *pardon*, for the most numerous and blackest crimes; it receives the blessings of *justification* from all condemnation, free and perfect liberty. See Matt. 9 : 2; Acts 13 : 38, 39; Rom. 3 : 21-26. What precious blessings are these!—*Adoption* follows the exercise of faith. The arms of the Eternal God expand to receive the returning outcast and prodigal, and the door of the Church and of Heaven opens to receive him who was the heir of wrath. "Ye are all the children of God by faith."—"Faith gives the enjoyment of *peace*," Rom. 5 : 1. Hushed are the charges of the law—silent are the thunders of Sinai—discomfited is Satan—every tongue rising in judgment is condemned; the peace of the soul flows as a river, and its righteousness as the waves of the sea.—Faith is the instrument of *sanctification*. "Purifying their hearts by faith, unto unfeigned love of the brethren." Acts 15 : 9; John 3 : 2, 3.—It fills with joy unspeakable, etc. Rom. 15 : 13.—Is not this a "precious faith"?

4th. *It is precious in its works.* It must be followed by works to prove its vitality. Hence we read of "the work of faith," etc. 1 Thess. 1 : 3, and see James 2 : 18. Behold the effort of faith; it benefits the believer himself—it longs to honor the Saviour—it seeks to benefit the Church—in its benevolence it encompasses the world—it agonizes to save souls from death.—Hence how laborious was Paul and his colleagues—and also the primitive Christians—what a stand against Satan was made by the martyrs—how valiant were Luther and Melancthon, and multitudes more, men of faith and undaunted courage!—O precious faith! thou art the producer of the noblest and holiest influences that have ever blessed this sinful world! Actuated by thee, the Missionary wends his way to barbarous hordes in foreign climes, to circulate and preach the everlasting Gospel. Impelled by thee, some of the most disinterested and self-denying of men are constantly laboring, by the diffusion of knowledge, the instruction of the young, and by preaching the cross, to rescue man from spiritual slavery and everlasting death. Stimulated by thee, the mind has commiserated the wretchedness of man, and formed institutions and hospitals, and asylums for the helpless, the indigent, and wretched. O precious faith! who can enumerate the blessings thou hast dispensed,—the miseries thou hast alleviated, and the crimes thou hast prevented? What! if no faith were found upon the earth? Then would this world become as Sodom, and like unto Gomorrah.—Let the fruits of infidelity be contrasted with the works of precious faith. What has infidelity done to benefit the world? Where are its blessings—where its benevolent institutions—where its trophies of love? Alas! compared with the holy fruits of faith, how wretched are the operations of infidelity! The summit of its ambition is the annihilation of Christianity, and mere gratification on the lap of sensual indulgence. Its influence hitherto has been but to scathe and destroy. How different from precious faith!

5th. *In the comfort and support which it imparts in seasons of trial.* Then the "God of hope has filled the soul with all joy and peace in believing, to make it abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." To the feeblest disciple Jesus says, "Let not your heart be troubled," etc. Faith has counteracted the chilling influence of poverty;

and in that season the prayer of faith has been answered. Witness the faith of the prophet; "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom," etc. Hab. 3 : 17, 18. Witness the faith of Job: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," Job 13 : 15. Faith has dispersed the darkness of the chamber of affliction, irradiated it with glory, and caused the lip of submission to kiss the bitterest cup of sorrow. Faith has stripped the world of its glitter and delusion, exposed its vanity, and given the victory over it. "And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Satan has come in like a flood to harass the soul, but he has been "resisted steadfastly in the faith." Bereavements the most affecting have wounded the mind, but faith has produced the hope of mutual recognition, and whispered to the soul, "Thy brother shall rise again;" "you shall meet in heaven." In persecution, faith has nerved the feeblest soul to martyrdom. In the closet, in reading the Scriptures, in the house of God, the hand of faith stretches to heaven, and reaches clusters of comfort from the Tree of Life, and draws water with joy out of the wells of salvation. When nations are dashed against one another — when rumors of war are loudly heard — when kingdoms are convulsed, and the sword is bathed in blood, faith says, "The Lord reigneth, let the earth be glad."

"His hand the good man fastens on the sky,
And bids earth roll, nor feels her idle whirl."

To see the triumphant influence of faith, see Heb. 11.

6th. It is precious on account of its *establishing influence*. "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established." 2 Chron. 20 : 20. — Faith gives the assurance of salvation. By acquaintance with the gracious promises and dealings of God, the Christian feels assured that he will be safely and triumphantly supported to the end of his life. He has an interest in all the promises, and feels persuaded that the infallible veracity of Jehovah will make them all good. — Faith removes his doubts and dispels his fear. He is "rooted and grounded in the truth." While others are carried away by the inventions and strange doctrines of men, he is "not moved away from the hope of the Gospel," but holds fast "the form of sound words." His heart is "established with grace," and he is "determined not to know anything but Jesus Christ and him crucified."

7th. "Precious" because it gives the *hope of eternal life, and a complete conquest over death*. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." Hope is intimately connected with faith. As there can be no true hope without faith, so vital saving faith always produces hope. It may have to war with constitutional feebleness of body and mind; still, in degree, it exists. Faith rests upon Christ for salvation and eternal life; hope expects to enjoy them here, in death, and in the paradise of immortality. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." "Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

How precious is this hope amid all the tempests of time! "Which hope we have as anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil," etc. Heb. 6 : 19. How valuable amid the darkness of this earthly night! It is the pole-star of the be-

liever in all his trials. It cheers him on; it guides him safely to the port of endless rest; for "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart."

When earthly joys have left the breast,
And even the last fond hope is cherished
Of mortal bliss—too like the rest—
Beneath woe's withering touch has perished,
With fadeless lustre streams that light—
A halo on the brow of night.

"Yes," says the Christian, "I am an heir of the inheritance of light, and I shall soon come to the possession of it forever. All these sorrows will soon be annihilated. 'Weeping endures but for a night; joy cometh in the morning.' I hear a voice from yonder temple, which says, 'Arise ye, and depart, for this is not your rest.' 'A house not made with hands,' raises its turrets before the vision of my faith. The spirits of departed saints already inherit it; they wait to receive me; they long for my arrival; they prepare to 'cry-unto me that my warfare is accomplished.' Terrestrial enjoyments already melt into distance, and fall into the shades of the long perspective. A little longer, and the fading visions of time shall float in broken images before my closing eyes. The sun dips below the horizon. The shadows of evening descend around me, but hope irradiates their gloom. The voice of God calls me home. Earth recedes. Time vanishes. Eternal glory is near. 'Arise, let us go hence.'"

Thus faith is "precious" in life and in death. Resting on the atoning sacrifice, the believer triumphs over the last enemy. Faith in Christ has procured for his soul the absolution of all sin, the removal of all guilt and condemnation, and it assures the soul of complete acceptance. Then why should he fear? He knows that death can never conquer Christ; and as he trusts in him for final and everlasting acceptance, he is enabled to surmount the infirmities of his nature, and to defy the king of terrors. "Strike, monster, strike;" sitting under the shadow of the cross, I fear not the mortal blow that will introduce my soul to immortal life. Strike! I know this body must fall; but "rejoice not over me, O mine enemy; though I fall I shall arise; though I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." "O death, where is thy sting," etc. 1 Cor. 15 : 55; Ps. 23 : 4.

Faith accounts death as only a *sleep*, 1 Thess. 4 : 13, 14, Acts 7 : 6; as a *departure*, Phil. 1 : 23; 2 Tim. 4 : 6; and as *entering into rest*, Rev. 14 : 13; Isa. 57 : 2. How calmly did Simeon speak of death! Luke 2 : 29. What a vision of glory faith gave to Stephen in the hour of martyrdom! Acts 7 : 56. Mark the confidence of Paul, "I am now ready to be offered," etc. Peter speaks of his death with as much calmness as a man about to put off his raiment, 2 Pet. 1 : 13, 14.—O wonderful achievements of "precious faith"!

Faith builds a bridge across the gulf of death,
To break the shock blind nature cannot shun,
And lands thought smoothly on the farther shore.
Death's terror is the mountain Faith removes,
That mountain barrier between man and peace!
'T is faith disarms destruction and absolves
From every clamorous charge the guiltless tomb.

APPLICATION.

1. Be thankful for the foundation of faith—as it follows the text, “through the righteousness of God,” etc.
 2. Pray for the increase of faith.
 3. How dreadful the state of unbelievers!
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XXII.—PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

“Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.”—MATT. 24: 44.

In this chapter Christ foretells the destruction of Jerusalem. — Though that event would certainly transpire, yet the exact time was hidden from man, v. 36. The statements made by Christ have been regarded by eminent commentators as having a reference to the day of judgment—that day of solemnity and dread, the coming of which will be sudden and unexpected. — The words may with the strictest propriety be applied to the day of death. Its approach may be sudden and unexpected, involving solemn and eternal consequences. The text therefore calls upon all to prepare for the hour of dissolution, so uncertain, and yet absolutely sure. Death will be to us as if the last trumpet had sounded, and the Son of God had appeared in all his glory to judge the quick and the dead;—because the quality of our hearts, and of our conduct at the day of death, will determine the nature of our everlasting abode; and the day of judgment will only be the confirmation of that state of eternal existence, with the addition of the body united to the soul by the resurrection, to partake of its pleasures, or share in its woes.

I. THE EVENT FOR WHICH WE ARE TO BE READY.

The event is the dissolution of the body. “It is appointed to man once to die.” “We must needs die,” etc. Death is the effect of sin. “By one man,” etc. Rom. 5: 12. Observe,

1st. At death *the body returns to its original dust*. “Dust thou art,” etc. “Then shall the body return to dust,” etc. Eccle. 12: 7. Death, then, as the effect of sin, is the cessation of existence. It is ended by disease, by sudden violence or casualty, or the human machine is worn out by oppression, punishment, affliction, or by protracted age. The lungs heave no more; the pulse ceases to beat; the blood is congealed in the veins; the organs of sight are dimmed; the tongue is silent, and the hand forgets its dexterity.

Such is the end of the human structure, so fearfully and wonderfully made. And however stately, well-formed, athletic, strong, and beautiful before, it must be consigned to the dust. Its tendency to putrescence causes even its once adorers to exclaim, “Bury my dead out of my sight.” It is deposited in the silent tomb, worms feed upon it, and it is hidden from mortal sight.

How loved, how valued once, avails thee not,
 To whom related, or by whom begot:
 A heap of dust alone remains of thee,
 'Tis all thou art, and all the proud shall be.

2d. At death *the soul and body separate*. They have been companions together. The soul has invented, projected, and devised plans and schemes, either for good or for evil, the body has been the instrument of its actions. But they will act together no more in time. Their next connection will be in eternity. The tie is broken, and cannot be reunited here.

This separation to the sinner must be deeply affecting; for all his pleasures arise from the gratification of his bodily senses——to the saint this separation is pleasing; for the body is one great impediment to his devotions and spirituality, either annoying him incessantly by its lusts, or indisposing and thwarting him by its tendency to lassitude, sickness, and death.

3d. At death *the soul appears before God*. Man is not a mere animal, but a spiritual being. He has a soul which must live forever. "But there is a spirit in man," etc. Job 32: 8. "The spirit shall return to God who gave it."

To the eye of sense death appears annihilation; but to the eye of faith it is dissolution, and that for an infinite purpose. Death conducts the soul to the immediate inspection and scrutiny of God, and its everlasting state is fixed according to the result of that investigation. See Gal. 6: 7, 8. [Illustrate further by referring to Luke 16: 19, etc.]

Think then of the momentous results of death. It mars the beauty and strength of the temple of the body, and casts it into the noisome grave; it tarnishes all its glory; terminates its happiness, and closes the period of accountability. It is the last of time, and the commencement of eternity. It is a complete change of existence, situation, circumstances, and feeling. It is the crisis of man's fate—the seal of his destiny. It develops either a smiling God, or a frowning judge; it conducts to the crown of life, or the regions of death; it conducts to eternal glory, or to everlasting perdition.——Therefore, "Be ye ready," etc.

II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN BEING READY?

Great events require suitable preparation.——No event is so important as death; but how little is it regarded! "They are destroyed from morning to evening: they perish forever, without any regarding it." The subject is gloomy and awful; and the whole study of sinners is to banish it, and keep it from the mind.——Observe, Preparation for death implies,

1st. *A perception of unfitness for death without an interest in the favor of God*. Man must feel himself to be vile—a transgressor—a rebel against God. Can a sinner unconvinced, unsubdued, unregenerated, and unforgiven, die in peace? Can he meet God with calmness and satisfaction? Impossible. "Without holiness no man," etc. The sinner must be brought to this concession, "I am unfit to die," or he will never "be ready."

2d. *Faith in Christ* which is instrumental in obtaining pardon of sin, and exemption from the accusation of the law. Christ must be known as the sacrificial atonement, as the end of the law for righteousness, as the sinner's surety, whose blood can cleanse from all sin, and as the Resurrection and the Life.

There must be dependence upon Christ to reconcile to God, and to secure from the wrath to come. "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law," etc. His death was equivalent to the destruction of all believers. There was such a value in his suffering and death, derived from his dignity, that, instead of their perdition, it was accepted as "an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling savor." Every moral purpose that could have been answered by the punishment of the sinner has been better subserved by the death of the Redeemer. Oh, then, repent and believe in Christ, and you shall be saved. Your sins and guilt, which make death terrible, and its sting so poignant, shall all be rolled away, for, Heb. 2 : 14, 15. Then you will be preparing for death.

If sin be pardoned, I'm secure,
Death has no sting beside;
The law gives sin its damning power,
But Christ my ransom died.

3d. *Holiness.* This is absolutely necessary, and it is the effect of *regeneration*. Hence, John 3 : 3. "You hath he quickened," Eph. 2 : 1.

As "new creatures," all believers hate sin, and follow after holiness. They hunger and thirst after righteousness; they pant for a greater conformity to Christ their Head. "They have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

4th. *Punctual attention to public and private means of grace.* These will, through Divine grace, prepare for death.

The House of God—the ministry of the word—ordinances—prayer, Christian intercourse, enlighten, sanctify, and detach the mind from the world, and direct it to Christ and heaven.——Private communion with God—reading the Scriptures—self-examination, and the visits of faith to the cross, advance the work of God in the soul, and tend to give an assurance of an actual interest in the covenant of Infinite Love, Rom. 8 : 14, 17.——Love to God—an intense desire to promote his glory in the salvation of man, will be the fruit of a vital faith—and a token of preparation for death.

III. MOTIVES TO URGE US TO BE READY.

1st. *Death is sure to come.* Nothing can prevent it. Every expedient has been tried, but there can be no discharge in this war. Therefore be ready.

2d. *The time of Death's approach is uncertain.* "For in such an hour," etc.

It may come when you are young and in health, and calculating on long life—when deeply immersed in worldly cares and business—when your mind is not the least directed towards it—in the hour of

festive enjoyment — at a time when your departure would apparently inflict deep injury on your business, on your families, etc. — and at a time when you would not be at all prepared for it, unpardoned, un-renewed, and without love to God. Awful thought! — Be ready therefore.

3d. *Abundant provision is made to induce this preparation.*

4th. *The present life is the only period in which we can prepare for death.* There is no middle state. No purgatorial fires. "As the tree falleth, so it lies."

5th. To be ready, indicates true wisdom, and gives peace; — while not to be ready betrays the most egregious folly, and produces painful suspense and uncertainty.

XXIII.—SIN DESTRUCTIVE.

"He that pursueth evil, pursueth it to his own death." — Prov. 11 : 19.

In human conduct it is a mark of true wisdom to reflect on consequences. Hence, Solomon says, "A prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself." — The cause of so many being involved in circumstances of embarrassment and misery, is the want of forethought. — And in spiritual matters, man is so depraved that he hates the investigation of his own conduct, and generally shuns it. No wonder then that he should "pursue evil even to his own death," and that the termination of his career should be marked by dying regrets and painful forebodings.

I. THE NATURE OF SIN.

Sin is trespass against the Almighty Lawgiver. It is a departure from God. It is the transgression of his righteous laws. It is acting contrary to his wise and holy will, 1 John 3 : 4. — Consider

1. *Its source.* The depraved heart is the source of all evil thoughts, desires, and actions. Ps. 51 : 5. This corruption of nature is the indwelling sin, Rom. 7 : 17, 20, and works all manner of concupiscence, Rom. 7 : 8 ; it was in man, Rom. 7 : 23, reigns over him and subjugates him, Rom. 6 : 11, 12, 14. It is the fruitful spring of iniquity. "Out of the heart of man," etc. Matt. 15 : 19. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest," etc. Gal. 5 : 19.

2. *Its development.* It develops itself by the disposition — by the temper — by the language : all these are characterized by evil. By self-gratification, "fulfilling the lusts of the flesh ;" — intemperance, love of worldly amusements, and other vanities — by delight in worldly association, and by resorting to places of wickedness — by the profanation of the Sabbath, contempt of God's word, and hatred to his people — by the despite of faithful and tender advice and warning — and sometimes by the most flagrant deeds of wickedness,

which lead to *penal inflictions*. "The way of transgressors is hard."

Thus the heart is like an impure fountain, sending forth filthy streams—like a corrupt tree, bearing bad and worthless fruit. Isa. 1 : 2, etc.

II. THE PURSUIT OF SIN. "He that pursueth evil."

This pursuit,

1. *Is the result of choice*. The sinner loves evil. It is the element in which his unregenerated nature loves to revel. Though sin is degrading, shameful, and ruinous, he loves it. He chooses it in preference to that which is real, substantial, and blissful. He chooses husks rather than the true and living bread—death rather than life—the world rather than Christ—perdition rather than heaven.

2. *He pursues it with avidity*. He rushes forward to gratification. He breaks through all restraints—turns a deaf ear to all remonstrance—makes every sacrifice, to pursue some imagined good. He is in earnest. He agonizes. He sees the phantom, the bubble, before him, and his eagerness to grasp it is extreme. Witness the pursuit of the covetous after glittering gold—the sensualist after momentary indulgence—the gay after amusement—the drunkard after the cup of intoxication; so eager in pursuit is the latter that the natural love of offspring, etc., is very frequently violated.

3. *This pursuit is progressive*. The sinner proceeds from one degree of wickedness to another—from a less evil to a greater. It gradually hardens—makes bolder in crime—and the misery connected with transgression is also progressive.

4. It is frequently pursued *in opposition to conviction*, and the *accusations of conscience*. These say, "Do thyself no harm," but he still pursues. Providential visitations, as personal affliction, family bereavements, etc., cry, "Escape for thy life," but he rushes on to sin. The Gospel says, "Flee from the wrath to come," but he reckons it all delusion. But alas! he is the deluded one, and subsequent events will prove it; for "sin when it is finished bringeth forth death." See James 1 : 13–15.

III. THE AWFUL TERMINATION OF SIN. "He pursueth it to his own death."

Sin has its seedtime, its growth, and its harvest.

1. It is *the death of reputation*. "Sin is a reproach to any people," Prov. 14 : 34, which see. It has blighted the fairest characters, and degraded those once highly esteemed.

Is there anything honorable connected with sin? If a man be not ashamed of his sins, he shall be put to shame *by* them. "A wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame." Prov. 13 : 5. What is there honorable or attractive about a swearer, a liar, an obscene jester, or a drunkard? Where is the reputation of an extortioner, a miser, an oppressor? What honor attaches to an infidel, or an atheist? None. For

his opinions or systems are prompted by passions debased, earthly, and devilish. There is no honor connected with sin.

2. It is frequently *the death of mental vigor*. Sin enervates and destroys the powers of the mind.

What mischief have drunkenness and sensuality done in this respect! Sin has driven man back to the imbecility of childhood; it has produced insanity; it has confined to the asylum. Look at the intellects of some persons in middle life, and in old age! What weakness, childishness, and folly! They seem to have bestowed no culture, and to have made scarcely any improvement. In intelligence, in wisdom, in seriousness, they are excelled even by some children. Alas! old man, thou art in a pitiable and degraded condition. The golden seedtime of mental improvement is gone, and thou art now reaping the harvest of thy folly. Thou hast "pursued evil," and it has destroyed thy mental vigor. Why that nervous excitability? Why those childish fears, and gloomy imaginings? Why those melancholy forebodings? Why that incoherent speech? Why? Thy intellect is under the power of death! Alas! alas! for thee, old man!

3. It is frequently *the death of health*. Sin, by the conduct to which it prompts, by its excess and riot, by its revelry and debauchery, impairs the constitution, wastes the body, and induces premature old age, or death.

Evil is pursued by sinners to their own death. Many might have lived long had they lived better, and have enjoyed a good old age, had it not been for their youthful folly; but now, many are dragging on their existence, "filled with the sins of their youth," which will "lie down with them in the grave." It has been said, "The board has killed more than the grave," and an eminent physician has given it as his opinion, that scarcely one in a thousand dies a natural death.

4. It is *the death of happiness*. This is obvious from what has already been advanced.—— "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." "Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him." "The wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest."

5. Sin has frequently caused *the infliction of death in the way of judgment*.

Some have been hurried away in the very career of sin and folly. Thus it was with Pharaoh, in the heat of battle, and whilst fighting against God. Thus it was with Saul, when slain upon Mount Gilboa. Thus it was with Nebuchadnezzar and his nobles, who died in the midst of a drunken feast. Thus it was with Judas, who went down "quick into hell." Thus with Ananias and Sapphira, who died with a lie upon their tongues; with Herod, who in the midst of his blasphemy was smitten by an angel. And if we had an inspired history of the present times, and could trace the causes of those effects now con-founded in the common course of things, we should find the destruction of many a transgressor as the result of Divine judgment.

6. *Sin destroys the soul*. All who die in impenitence and unbelief, die in their sins, and go down to the grave with their guilt on

their own heads, and it will rise with them to judgment. Death comes to such in its original form, with a curse. "The wages of sin is death," not the corruption of the body in the grave, but "banishment from the presence of the Lord," etc. It is to be accounted "cursed, and to depart into everlasting fire," etc. It is "the second death." It is "the worm that dieth not," etc.

APPLICATION.

1. Learn to estimate things according to their final results; judge of religion in this way, and also of the pleasures of sin.
2. Let those who are delivered from the pursuit of evil be thankful. "Ye were once children of wrath, even as others."
3. Let the pursuit of evil be abandoned, by repentance and faith in Christ. There is mercy in him for the vilest.

XXIV.—CHRIST OUR PASSOVER.

A METAPHORICAL SKETCH.

"Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us."—1 COR. 5 : 7.

THE Passover was a solemn festival of the Jews, and was instituted to commemorate the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, and the Divine regard to them when the destroying angel passed through the land. See Ex. 12 : 11, 14, 29-51. How fearful was the manifestation of Divine wrath against Egypt's obdurate king! That dreadful event, the death of their first-born, shall break his stubborn heart, and release the Israelites from his galling bondage. While thousands of Egypt's primest sons shall fall around, they shall be safe, and live. The blood of a lamb sprinkled on their door-posts, indicated to the Minister of vengeance as he rapidly passed to destroy, that the inmates of the house had by sacrifice propitiated the Divine favor, and that God had become their salvation. — So great was the deliverance, that the Passover was to hold it in remembrance forever. — To some this ceremony may appear weak and unmeaning, but faith penetrates the outward veil, and discerns the hidden mystery of Christ's redeeming love, even as Moses "by faith kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood," Heb. 11 : 28. — The Passover was a prophetic type, a very expressive image of the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Hence the text. — Consider

I. THE PASCHAL LAMB AS TYPICAL OF CHRIST. With regard

1st. *To the victim.* It was a lamb. Ex. 12 : 3.

Jesus Christ is called "a lamb." John 1 : 29; 1 Pet. 1 : 19. That animal is a fit emblem of him who was taken from among men; raised up from among his brethren; and like that lovely creature, did injury to none, though he received it from many; it is useful both in life and

death, being at once our clothing and food. The lamb is the emblem of innocence, meekness, and resignation; and these virtues were embodied in the disposition and conduct of our Redeemer. See Isa. 53:7; 1 Pet. 2:28.

2. The Paschal lamb was to be a *male of the flock of a year old, and without blemish*, the choice of the flock, Ex. 12:5.

This typified the dignity, excellence, and infinite purity of the Divine Lamb. — The Paschal lamb was to be taken out of the flock; signifying that Christ should be taken from amongst men, or from among his brethren, Deut. 17:15; and be of the seed of Abraham, according to the flesh, Heb. 2:14. — It was a *male of the flock, of a year old*; for Christ is “a Son given unto us,” and suffered in the flower of his age; he was offered in the vigor of life, and in the strength of his manhood, without blemish and spot. He was a perfect character. “He did no sin, and in his mouth guile was never found.” Though descended from an impure race of ancestors, he brought no stain into the world; he contracted not the smallest taint of evil from his converse with evil men, or from the temptations by which he was assailed. “He was holy, harmless,” Heb. 7:26. Judas and Pilate attested his innocence, etc.

3. It was *separated from the flock*, as the appointed and proper victim.

So Christ was selected by the Father, as the only proper agent to effect the redemption of man. “Him hath God the Father sealed.” Jehovah “raised him up,” “anointed him,” and “sent him” into the world. “I have exalted one chosen from amongst the people.” — See Acts 2:23.

4. It was to be separated from the flock *four days* before it was slain.

Jesus was crucified at the end of four thousand years of the world, cut off in the fourth year of his ministry, and entered Jerusalem four days before his crucifixion, and precisely at the time of the passover.

5. The Paschal lamb was *to be slain*. It was slain by the officiating high-priest.

Christ was put to death in the flesh; and as the great High-priest, he offered himself to God. Heb. 7:24, etc.; 9:11–14, etc.; 10:9, 10. — It was to be slain in the *Evening*; so Christ was sacrificed in the evening of the day; in the evening of time, in the latter age or dispensation of the world. — It was to be *roasted with fire*. A consuming fire, the emblem of God’s wrath against sin. It was the emblem of those sufferings so intense and overwhelming, as seen in the garden, and on the cross. Ps. 22:14, 15. — It was to be sacrificed before the whole assembly. Christ was crucified at one of the great festivals of the Jews — the feast of the passover — and was made a spectacle to men, to angels, etc.

6. No bone of the Paschal lamb was *to be broken*, and none of it was to be left until morning. One lamb was to be offered for each *family*, and if its members were too few to eat a whole lamb, two

families were to join together. In the time of Josephus, a paschal society consisted of at least ten persons to one lamb, and not more than twenty.

To accomplish the first, the soldiers brake not the legs of Christ, as was usual with those crucified, John 19 : 32, 33. — To fulfil the last, he was taken down from the cross the same evening in which he died.

II. THE EFFICACY OF THE BLOOD OF THE PASCHAL LAMB, AS TYPICAL OF THE EFFICACY OF CHRIST'S BLOOD.

1. The blood of the Paschal lamb was *to be sprinkled on the door-posts of their houses*, Ex. 12 : 22, that it might be a visible indication of their interest in the Divine favor—of what the Lord had done, and what he was about to do for them.

And the blood of Christ must be sprinkled on our consciences, Heb. 10 : 22. If we have an interest in his precious blood, it will be visible. The blood of the Redeemer will be upon us in its effects. By pardon—by justification—by peace—by joy in the Holy Ghost—by rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God. No longer appearing as criminals, condemned, etc. ; no longer approximating the period of Divine infliction, like the Egyptians. 1 John 1 : 7 ; Heb. 12 : 24.

2. The blood of the Paschal lamb was *to be applied with a bunch of hyssop*.

Representing the hand of faith applying the blood of Jesus, John 3 : 36. Hence we are pardoned and justified by faith, Rom. 5 : 1, etc.

Mr. McEwen beautifully observes: "Christ is dead in vain to us, unless applied by faith unto the conscience. His blood must not be sprinkled behind the door; for we must publicly profess that we are not ashamed of the cross of Christ: nor below the door; for it must not be trodden under foot; but above, and on every side, on all that we are, on all that we have, and on all we do. Indeed, by his all-penetrating eye, the doors of the house and heart are seen with equal clearness."

3. The sprinkling of the blood was *the guarantee of future safety*. It protected the Israelites from the destroying angel.

Christ's blood protects from everlasting perdition. — Had an Israelite despised the ordinance of the passover, and not sprinkled his door-posts, he would have shared the fate of the Egyptians, Ex. 12 : 29. The sprinkling of the blood was their salvation. — So it is with all believers now; the blood of Christ is their only sanctuary from guilt and exposure to wrath. They fear them not, but rejoice in perfect salvation. They fear not Satan, for when he sees the sprinkling of Christ's blood upon the soul, he is vanquished; — they fear not death, for his precious blood has extracted its sting; — they fear not judgment, for the Redeemer's blood will cause them to appear there without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Divine justice, the destroying angel, will pass by them, discerning their interest in the new covenant, and while he pours his vials of wrath upon those who have despised the Divine sacrifice, they shall enter into the joy of their Lord.

Let the Christian look more to the *blood of the Passover*. The haughty tyrant of Egypt was often alarmed by the awful prodigies wrought by Moses; but never was he thoroughly subjugated till the blood was sprinkled. Then the prey was taken from the mighty. In vain he pursues the Israelites; for never more shall they wear his chain. So the teaching of Christ, his miracles, and his prophecies, struck terror into the Prince of darkness, but never was he thoroughly repulsed, till on the cross Christ spoiled principalities and powers, etc. Even so shall his people overcome, by having recourse to his all-conquering blood, Rev. 12 : 11.

III. THE CELEBRATION OF THE PASSOVER AS TYPICAL OF CHRISTIAN PARTICIPATION.

1. *It was to be eaten.*

And Christ is to be spiritually received. There must be a participation in the benefits of his sacrifice. See this stated, John 6 : 54-56; 1 Cor. 11 : 24.

2. *The whole lamb was to be eaten, and no part left.*

Christ must be received in all his characters—as a prophet, etc.—as our wisdom, righteousness, etc. — in all his ordinances and precepts. There must be no division—no partiality. “Is Christ divided?” 1 Cor. 1 : 12, 13.

3. *It was eaten by the Israelites.* God’s people.

None can relish Christ but believers. “The carnal mind,” etc. “The natural man receiveth not,” etc.

4. *It was eaten with unleavened bread, and with bitter herbs.*

The former indicates sincerity and truth; the latter typified the bitter sorrows and sufferings of Christ—the bitterness of contrition for sin, and the bitter tribulations through which believers would have to pass.

5. *It was to be eaten in haste*—and in an *attitude of preparation* for their departure to Canaan. See Ex. 12 : 11.

The loins girt, and feet shod, signifying the girding up the loins of the mind, and the preparation of the Gospel of peace, or a readiness to every good work. The staff in hand implies that here we have no continuing city, and that we must “look for and *hasten* unto the coming of the day of God.” Christians must be making daily progress towards the land of everlasting bliss.

6. *As the Passover was commemorative of a very great deliverance, so the Lord’s supper is designed to show forth the Lord’s death, etc.* Contrast Ex. 12 : 14, 26, 27, with 1 Cor. 11 : 23, etc.

XXV.—CHRIST THE LIFE OF HIS PEOPLE.

“Christ who is our life.”—Col. 3 : 4.

It is very important to recognize and understand the cause of our enjoyments. It is so in temporal matters, and it must especially be so in our spiritual affairs.——Christ is the source of our spiritual happiness. “In him was life, and the life was the light of men.” John 1 : 4. “I am come that ye might have life,” etc., John 10 : 10. The recognition of this truth will produce gratitude and devotedness to his service. And constant dependence upon him, as the life of our souls, will promote their prosperity ; and union to him will cause us to participate in his excellencies, to bear his image, and to reflect his glory.

Consider,

I. CHRIST IS OUR LIFE, AS HE DELIVERED US FROM THE SENTENCE OF EVERLASTING DEATH.

He reversed that sentence of condemnation. The exclusive power to give life to the condemned was claimed by him. See John 3 : 14-17 ; 6 : 32-35.

1. Christ has *answered all the demands of the law*. All men have sinned ; by the law they are subject to the punishment of death. Law cannot, in its own nature, admit of pardon ; were it to admit of this, it would cease to be law.——Christ came and died to answer the demand of law by substitution. An adequate substitute cannot be a creature, because a creature can do nothing beyond his duty ; to say the least, an adequate substitute must be one who is not naturally under the law, because his merit only can be transferable to others ; a Divine substitute is the only reason for diverting the demands of the law from the person actually guilty. Where is this substitute to be found ? In Christ, who says, “Lo, I come,” etc. Heb. 10 : 9, etc.

2. He gives man to *enjoy the benefits of his substitution*. The great results of it are, *pardon, justification, and adoption*, as realized in this life. Beautifully stated, in Acts 13 : 38, 39 ; Rom. 8 : 1, 33, 34 ; Gal. 3 : 13, 14, 26 ; 1 John 3 : 1. Now think of these great blessings unmerited, undeserved,—perfectly free and gratuitous, purchased by the agony and unparalleled sufferings and death of Christ. On that cross he was bound as a captive, that I might be free ; he was smitten of God and afflicted instead of me. [Amplify.]

II. HE IS THE AUTHOR OF OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE ON EARTH. Through his power it is commenced.

“The carnal mind is enmity against God ;” it has no relish for his service. It is not properly impressed with its own guilt ; it does not appreciate the substitution of Christ, nor comprehend the applicability of that substitution to its lapsed and guilty state. The soul of man is like a corpse in the grave—dead—past feeling. It requires the outstretched arm of Omnipotence, and the melting voice of Infinite pity.

to be brought to bear upon the spiritual entombment of the sinner, saying, "Lazarus come forth." "Awake, thou that sleepest," etc. Eph. 5 : 14. — Man requires to be *quickened*. Eph. 2 : 1-6. Thus with the sinner, the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. *Christ is his life*. He now perceives harmony, beauty, and worth, where once he observed nothing but confusion, and discord, and insignificance. "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

III. CHRIST IS OUR LIFE, AS HE PRODUCES IN US THOSE EXERCISES BY MEANS OF WHICH WE REALIZE THE BENEFITS OF HIS SACRIFICE.

By the influence of his Spirit he brings us to *repentance*; to contrition; to humbleness of mind, by which sin is loathed, hated, confessed, and forsaken. Zech. 12 : 10. — He gives us to see our guilt, misery, and helplessness. *By faith* Christ is received, and with him all the blessings flowing from his substitution. Pardon and justification come by faith. Acts 13 : 38, 39. Acceptance with God, and access to him, are realized by faith. Rom. 5 : 2; Eph. 2 : 18; 3 : 12. Peace and joy are attained by faith. Rom. 5 : 1, etc. Security comes by faith; it rests upon the foundation Christ. Isa. 28 : 16. By faith the Christian stands; by faith he walks; by faith he *lives*, for *Christ is his life*, and the life he lives in the flesh, etc. Gal. 2 : 20. — Faith is the grand connecting medium between Christ and the soul. See this stated John 15 : 4, 5.

IV. CHRIST IS OUR LIFE, AS HE RENOVATES THE HEART AND CONDUCT.

As soon as *faith* looks at the cross, sin becomes "exceedingly sinful." Then it is *seen* as the most inveterate foe, and detested and spurned. And the Holy Spirit is given to impress the mind with the awful effects of transgression, and to produce an utter abhorrence of it. Sin is beheld as the cause of alienation from the life of God, and fellowship with him; and as the source of all present and future misery. For reconciliation with God and purity, we are indebted to Christ; his death is the cause of our sanctification. See Tit. 2 : 14. His Spirit is called the Spirit of *holiness*. His word is the instrument of our sanctification, John 17 : 17; James 1 : 18. — Christ, too, is the *great exemplar* of his Church, and his Spirit inclines to follow his steps. We are "predestinated to be conformed to *his image*."

V. CHRIST IS THE LIFE OF ALL CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY.

Christians are to labor in Christ's vineyard; to show forth his praises. They are bought with a price, etc. They have talents to consecrate to his service, and they are to be fruitful in every good word and work. But none can be so without Christ, *who is our life*. He dwells in us, he lives in us, as the sun lives in the garden, by his influence producing fragrance and fruits; or as the soul lives in the body; actuating every limb, and penetrating every particle. See Rom. 14 : 7, 8; 2 Cor. 5 : 14, 15.

VI. CHRIST IS THE LIFE OF ALL SPIRITUAL ENJOYMENT.

He feeds the souls of his people; but it is by their faith that this food

is converted into aliment. "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me." Hence to enjoy Christ as our life, there must be the constant exercise of faith. The natural man looks to earthly things for enjoyment. But the supernatural man exhibits a marvellous elevation of thought and feeling. He can no more rest in these low things than an angel can; and, like an angel, his only bliss is in beholding and adoring God.

And where does he find enjoyment? He finds it where Christ dwells, and in institutions of which *he is the life*. He finds it in *ordinances*. In the house of God; in his worship; in preaching; in praise and prayer; in Christian fellowship; in baptism and the Lord's Supper. Of all these *Christ is the life*. They would be as parched ground if he were not there; but his presence makes them "wells of salvation."

He finds enjoyment in the *promises*, and Christ is the life of them. They are all "yea and amen in him."

He finds enjoyment in the *Bible*, for Christ is the life of it, and in *meditation*, for Christ makes it sweet, and in his closet, for Christ is there.

He finds enjoyment even in *afflictions*, though they are "grievous, yet they afterwards yield," etc. Christ has appointed them; he has proportioned them; he will superintend their operation, and direct their issue. See Rom. 5 : 3, 4, 5; 2 Cor. 12 : 10. "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth." Job. 5 : 17.

Thus the Christian life is a happy one. — Why is religion so burdensome to many? Because they have nothing in them to render these things like the functions of life, natural and easy. Hence they drudge and toil on, saying, "What a weariness it is to serve the Lord!" Where spiritual life exists, there is an inward propensity to holiness, and no ignoble and slavish devotion, springing from custom, or impelled by external motives only. The faithful find his service to be perfect freedom; his yoke easy and his burden light. "Such a burden," observes one, "as a pair of wings to a bird; they would be awkward, troublesome, and useless, if tied on, but as living parts of its body, they are graceful and pleasing, and the instruments of flight towards heaven."

VII. CHRIST IS THE LIFE OF THE SOUL IN THE HOUR OF DEATH.

Christ has conquered death. He has plucked its sting. He has deprived it of its terrors. Heb. 2 : 14, 15; 1 Cor. 15 : 55-57. Paul found it to be so, "Having a desire," etc. Simeon found it so, "Lord now lettest thou," etc. Nature may suffer, and sometimes the mind may quail, but *Christ our life* bears up the head of the dying saint, and cheers his heart by the power of his atonement. Leaning upon that staff of atoning love, says the believer, I will pass through the gloomy vale, I fear not the bands of death, for they are broken: nor its sting, for it is gone. My heart and my flesh shall fail, but the power of thy resurrection, O Jesus, shall be the strength of my heart, and its blessings shall be my portion forever. Christ is my life.

VIII. CHRIST WILL BE THE LIFE OF THE BODY IN THE MORNING OF THE RESURRECTION.

"I am the resurrection and the life." John 11 : 24, 25; 1 Cor. 6 : 14;

2 Cor. 4 : 14; 1 Cor. 15. — Christ will be the agent to effect his people's resurrection; it shall be done by "his mighty power." — His glorified body will be the model to which the bodies of his saints will be formed. "Our conversation," etc. Phil. 3 : 20, 21.

IX. CHRIST WILL BE THE LIFE OF HEAVEN.

Heaven is his dwelling-place, his imperial palace. John 14 : 1, 2, etc.; 17 : 24. — The happiness of the believer derives its sweetness from connection with Christ. It is not on sitting on a throne, or walking in white, or reigning in life that his mind dwells, but on sitting with *Christ* on his throne, walking with *Him* in white, and reigning with *Him* in life. Without Jesus earth would be a prison, and heaven would be no heaven to him. Christ in heaven is its beauty, its charm, its essence, and its security. What would the throne be, if the Lamb were not in the midst of it, as it had been slain? What would the Paradise of God be, if the tree of life was not in it? What would the fountains of living water be, if the Lamb did not lead us to them? What would the society of heaven be, if he were absent, to whom every ear delights to listen, and whom every eye follows wherever he goes? But he is there, visible to every eye, and accessible to every saint. He is there; and he gladdens every soul, and tunes every harp. He is there; the subject of every song of praise, the life of all their joys, and the rapture of all their hearts. "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" Just men made perfect, angels shining in glory, thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, ye are not my saviours, ye are not my heaven. Jesus is my life, my joy, my glory, and my all.

APPLICATION.

1. How wretched the condition of worldly men! They labor to find enjoyment on earth, in the creature. Real life and enjoyment are only in Christ.
2. Christ is now offered to you.
3. How dreary and dreadful will eternity be without Christ!

XXVI.—THE SECURITY OF THE CHURCH.

"It fell not; for it was founded upon a rock." — MATT. 7 : 25.

THE comparison of the Great Teacher in the context indicates the safety and happiness of those who trust in Christ, and the misery of those who reject him. — The language is also calculated to afford encouragement and hope. Sometimes Zion is opposed, afflicted, and clouded, and then her people mourn and tremble for the future. But Zion is founded upon a rock, and cannot be shaken.

I. THE CHARACTER OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

The character of God's people is described in verse 24; "Who-soever heareth," etc.

1. *They are wise.* Like the man who built his house upon a rock. A procedure which denotes wisdom, foresight, and precaution.—Believers have been enlightened by the Spirit to discern that which is requisite for their safety from the effects of sin.—They mistrust themselves, and therefore,

2. *They revere and regard the truth.* “Hear these sayings of mine.” They do not lean to their own understandings, but regard Christ as a wise and infallible Teacher. They hear him. — “Learn of me,” says the great Prophet.

3. *They do his will.* “Heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them.” This is more than mere profession. Practical Piety is infinitely important. See ver. 21, 23. Hypocrites and formalists may hear the sayings of Christ, but they will not do them. — It is otherwise with believers. Has Christ said, Repent? They have repented. Believe? They have believed. [Amplify.]

II. THE GROUND OF THEIR CONFIDENCE. “*It was founded upon a rock.*”

Christ is called “that Rock,” 1 Cor. 10 : 4. His finished work on the cross as the great atoning sacrifice is the *foundation* of the Christian’s faith and hope. And it is firmer than a rock. See Isa. 28 : 16. “A rock” conveys the idea,

1. *Of strength and power.* Look at those rocks in the ocean’s bed which for ages have defied the most furious waves. — Created things are like the sand, fleeting, gliding, uncertain. “All power,” said Christ; “is given unto me,” etc. “He is able to save to the uttermost.” — It conveys the idea,

2. *Of Durability.* Called the Rock of Ages, subject to no change; immutable; “the same yesterday,” etc. Whatever concussions and revolutions shake this globe, he remains the same. Ancient empires, cities, columns, etc. etc., have departed, but Christ is the same. Heb. 1 : 10.

III. THE SECURITY OF THE CHURCH IN THE TIME OF TRIAL. “*It fell not.*” This implies,

1. *That the Church is frequently assailed by opposition.* Its strength and durability must be tried. It was assailed by *Jewish unbelief* — by *Pagan persecution*, in the time of the Apostles, and in subsequent ages — by the *Popish power*, and its atrocious cruelties — by *ecclesiastical domination* — by *infidelity and atheism* — by *recreant professors*, and the *abettors of error*.

2. *That the Church has withstood all opposition.* “It fell not.” While other systems have fallen, and are almost forgotten, the Church continues firmly fixed on the immutable Saviour. — False prophets have fallen — false teachers and false Christs have fallen; and all future pretenders will fall; “There is none other name,” etc.

Pharisees have fallen — the self-righteous, the formal, and the hypocrite, have fallen. But the believer falls not, for he is “founded upon a rock.” See Ps. 46 : 1; 125 : 2; Isa. 54 : 10; Rom. 8 : 35, etc.

The Church always did stand, and it always will stand.

Sometimes, like Israel, it multiplies under oppression. Frequently the blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the Church. When faithful it is always secure. Surrounding nations never prevailed against Israel as long as they confided in God. And even when the Church has been reduced by internal unfaithfulness, it has not failed. Kingdoms and empires have passed away, and not a wreck of them is left, but some vestiges in ruins, the monumental mockery of the boasts of men; but the Church still stands overshadowed with the wings of Almighty Love.

Behold the antediluvian Church in the family of Noah, outriding the flood itself. "It fell not."

Behold the Patriarchial Church gathered in the tents of Abraham till it burst forth in the glories of the wilderness, and the institutions of Zion. "It fell not."

Behold the Jewish Church preserved in Babylon, and amidst the mighty convulsions that followed, more durable than the conquests of Alexander. "It fell not."

Behold the Christian Church, outliving even the eternal Rome; and, sheltered amidst the convulsions and barbarism of the middle ages, her light burst the cloud at the glorious Reformation, a light which has ever since been prevailing against the darkness of error, and subduing men to its influence. "It fell not."

And though Popery and Infidelity are now planting their batteries against the Church, yet "He that sits," etc., Ps. 2: 1-4. It shall not fall.

Walk then about Zion, mark her bulwarks, consider her palaces, and from the past we may take up this triumphant strain, "This God is our God forever and ever."

APPLICATION.

1. Let this subject check despondency as to the issue of God's Church.
2. Let it induce greater zeal. The cause is good and must succeed.
3. How safe are believers! They are upon "the Rock."

XXVII.—THE DIVINE PRESENCE AN ANTIDOTE TO FEAR.

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee: yea, I will help thee: yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."—ISA. 41: 10.

THE promises of God are a rich inheritance to his people. They are suitable to all the conditions of life in which they may be placed. They cannot be in any trial now; they cannot apprehend any future difficulty, danger, or affliction, without finding an appropriate promise of relief or deliverance. Their Almighty Parent knows their frame,

etc., and his infinite love will secure their welfare. The great Shepherd of his sheep knows to what enemies his flock is exposed, and he will deliver them in due time. The great High Priest, Christ Jesus, knows their timidity of heart, and readiness to faint, and therefore he addresses them in accents of tenderness, "Fear thou not," etc.

I. THAT THE PEOPLE OF GOD ARE SOMETIMES THE SUBJECT OF FEAR AND DREAD.

1. This fear is distinct from *slavish fear*, of which all the unregenerate are the subjects. They are conscious of sin and guilt, and tremble at its consequences, especially when afflicted and near death. — Believers are delivered from this fear, by faith in the sacrifice of Christ. Rom. 8 : 15 ; 1 John 4 : 18. — They now have a filial fear, Ps. 79 : 7 ; Heb. 12 : 28.

2. This fear or dismay is induced by several causes. Sometimes by *natural timidity*—by nervous excitability—by extremely severe trials—by comprehensive views of the Divine purity, and a consciousness of great imperfections.

But more particularly the believer

1. *Fears his sins.* He feels he is not perfect. There is great deficiency in his conversation, often frivolous, etc.—in his actions, not always consistent. And the state of his heart distresses him. What unholy desires, thoughts, affections, etc. His neglect of duty, in his family, and in society, intimidates him. "If thou, Lord, shouldst be strict," etc.

2. *He fears his trials.* Personal and relative affliction — painful bereavements — the withering influence of poverty — fears that he shall lack the blessings of Providence. The apprehension of these trials, and the actual endurance of them, distress many a feeble saint, and induce him to say, "All these things are against me." The life of a Christian is often like that of a mariner, exposed to storms, and rolling billows, and dashing destructive waves. He fears he will be engulfed.

3. *He fears his foes.* Satan, who sometimes gains an advantage over him, and who desires "to have him," etc. The world with all its blandishments, seducing and destructive influence. It may already occupy a place in his heart, claiming the sole monopoly. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." This distresses him. He fears he is too much under its power. — His *besetting sins*, and his *inward depravity*, annoy and distress him. — Often they of the flesh persecute those who are born after the Spirit.

4. *He fears his duties.* They are so great — so solemn — his qualifications are so few — the discharge of them is likely to be so imperfect — the corruptions of his heart rebel against holy duties — he marks the zeal and devotedness of others, and finds himself so cold and indifferent, a feeble, backward, and unfruitful professor. Therefore he fears, etc.

5. He is dismayed as to *the final result of his profession*. "I shall one day perish by the hand of the enemy." I feel so vile and unwor-

thy that I shall be cut off at last. I shall never hear the plaudit, "Well done!" but the command, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness," etc.

6. *He fears death and perdition.* In what form will death come — what will be the disease to terminate existence — will it be lingering, or short, or sudden? Then the separations — the surrender of all earthly ties, and all secular concerns — the bodily pains, the convulsions and decay, the groans and dying strife — the immense consequences of death — rapture or woe — eternity. O! a child of dust has some cause for fear and dismay.

To allay these fears, the carnal man may call to his aid his convivial friends, and worldly diversions; to drown these apprehensions, he may summon to his aid human courage, and philosophy; but, alas! these cannot conquer his painful forebodings. He must have God; for none but God can help him.

II. THAT THE ALL-SUPPORTING PRESENCE OF GOD IS AN ANTIDOTE TO THE FEARS OF GOD'S PEOPLE. "*Fear thou not, for I am with thee,*" etc.

In the sacred volume we read of God's *essential presence*, by which we understand the universal manifestation of his power, glory, and goodness. See Ps. 139 : 7. That presence pervades the universe. Jer. 23 : 24.

To Israel he granted his *symbolical presence*, going before them in a pillar of cloud by day, and in a pillar of fire by night. In the tabernacle, and in the temple, the mercy-seat was overshadowed by his glory.

Also his *providential presence*. Acts 17 : 27, 28; by this he supplies the wants of all. "He is the Saviour of all men, but especially of them that believe." Thus a special providence of God blesses the Church.

But his *gracious presence* is here implied, "I am with thee." Through faith in my Son, thou art reconciled to me — a member of my family, an heir of God, and joint heir with Christ. Therefore, "I will never leave thee," etc. Ex. 33 : 14. "Wherever two or three," etc. He manifests his presence by the *influence of his Spirit*, in the closet, in Christian fellowship, in the House of God, under the preaching of the word, etc. Observe,

1. *He is present with the believer in every scene.* In seasons of *mental dejection*, produced by a consciousness of spiritual deficiency — present to assure by his Spirit that the sacrifice of his Son is sufficient to blot out all his sins, and to save him to the uttermost. — In *seasons of trial*, when billow after billow of affliction, etc., dashes against him — when Satan comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him. When the objects of his love are severed from him by death — or when earthly comforts fail — or his foes persecute him, Jesus says, "I am with thee." "It is I, be not afraid." I will not leave thee in the darkest night of adversity. "When thou passest through the waters," etc. Isa. 43 : 2. — *In the discharge of thy duties*, I will be with thee to make them congenial to thy renovated spirit — to give

thee life and joy in them, to make them a blessing to others.—I will be with thee in the *gloomy hour of death*, when thy heart and thy flesh fail—when all else shall fail—when thou art suffering and dying—and stepping into eternity. I will irradiate the valley of death, calm thy fear, bear up thy head, sustain thy faith, and give thee the staff of the atonement to bear thee safely through. “Fear not,” I, the God of the everlasting covenant, “am with thee.” I will be thy Guide even unto death.

But the respective phrases of the text are synonymous, and therefore beautifully *emphatic*. The specification of Divine interposition in time of need is actually transporting. Here is the promise of

2. His *comforting presence*. “Be not dismayed, *I am thy God*.” Great as is the difference in purity, in knowledge, in glory, in grandeur, etc., betwixt thyself and me, yet “*I am thy God*.” “Though the Lord be high, yet he hath respect to the lowly.” By my Spirit thou hast been humbled—the middle wall of separation has been broken down by Calvary’s sacrifice. Thy faith rests there—thy soul shelters there, and thou art accepted in the Beloved. “*I am thy God*,” though thou art unworthy. I am thy God, and all my perfections are thine. All the blessings of the new covenant are thine. All my promises, and all heavenly blessings, and heaven itself, are thine. Therefore, be not dismayed. Wherever thou art, despised, scorned, rejected, suffering, dying, think of this assurance, uttered by the Father of thy spirit, “*I am thy God*.” I am thy King, thy Guide, thy Shepherd, thy Physician, thy Friend, thy Redeemer, thine everlasting all.

3. His *strengthening presence*. “I will strengthen thee;”—for affliction, so that thou shalt not sink—for conflict, so that thou shalt be more than a conqueror—for thy profession, so that thou shalt honor it, and glorify me, etc. Did he not strengthen Paul in his conflicts? See 2 Cor. 12 : 8, 9, etc. What promises of strength are recorded!—How many has he strengthened to labor, to suffer, to conquer, to die!

4. His *supporting and interposing presence*. “Yea, I will help thee.” All other helpers will fail. “Vain is the help of man.” So it was with Paul. See 2 Tim. 4 : 16–18. This language may refer to extraordinary seasons of peril and danger, and Divine deliverance then. Let the Church therefore rejoice in this promise. See Ps. 46 : 1, 2, etc. “Call upon me in the day of trouble,” etc. He helped Moses, Ex. 4 : 2. See also Ps. 144 : 1, 2. He was with Daniel. Dan. 6 : 22, and others.

5. His *sustaining and preserving presence*. “Yea, I will uphold,” etc. The “right hand of my righteousness,” may refer to the justice of God which shall ever defend and support his people, and frustrate the designs of their enemies. “No weapon,” etc. Isa. 54 : 17. It may signify his omnipotence: “The right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly.” “Shall not God avenge his own elect?” Woe to them who oppose the saints! Have they “an arm like God, or can they thunder with a voice like him?”—It may refer to the Divine faithfulness, and to the security and final safety of believers through the righteousness of God by Christ’s finished work, by which the law was magnified, the justice of God satisfied, etc. etc.—That was the stretching forth of the omnipotent arm of Divine love to save. That is the ground of the believer’s security. It upholds them. The law may charge them, Satan accuse

them, perdition may be deserved; but the promise is, "I will uphold thee," etc. "For I am persuaded," etc. Rom. 8: 38.

APPLICATION.

1. Believers, great are your privileges. Think of them, and wonder, rejoice, and praise.
2. Avoid fear. It dishonors God. It enervates your mind. It bringeth a snare.
3. How miserable are sinners without the Divine presence!

XXVIII.—ABRAHAM'S INTERCESSION FOR SODOM.

"And he said, oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once; peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake."—GEN. 18: 32.

THIS language forms a part of Abraham's intercession for Sodom. It is the last condition which he could urge for its preservation. But that condition was not found to exist; therefore its destruction was inevitable.—Sodom was the capital of Pentapolis, the crimes of which were so infamous, that God destroyed it by fire from heaven, with other cities, Gomorrah, Zeboim, and Admah, equally as wicked, Gen. 19. The plain on which they stood was pleasant and fruitful, like an earthly paradise. It abounded with bitumen; and this was ignited by the lightning, etc.—Afterwards the waters of the Jordan overflowed it to such an extent as to form the Dead Sea, or Lake of Sodom, or the Lake of Asphaltis.—From the intercession of Abraham let us derive instruction.

I. The *wickedness* of the inhabitants of Sodom and their *exposure to destruction* deeply affected the heart of the patriarch. He saw the moral and intellectual powers of man prostrated below the brutes that perish—he knew that such wickedness was hateful to Infinite Purity—that the measure of their iniquity was full—that it was a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, not merely as it concerns the body, but also as it concerns the soul.

And similar feelings pervade the minds of all true Christians now. They look at the degenerate and ruined condition of sinners, who are under the curse—exposed to everlasting death, etc. etc. Like Abraham, like Christ who wept over Jerusalem, like Paul who mourned on account of the approaching doom of the Jews, they are deeply affected by the sinful state and coming doom of the impenitent and unbelieving.

II. Abraham manifested *deep solicitude* for the deliverance of Sodom from destruction. He not only saw their danger, but was anxious to avert it. His intercessions imply this. He was a phi-

lanthropist, anxious to save them. Probably he thought that the granting of a longer space for repentance, and warnings faithfully given, might be successful in turning their hearts to God.

Christians long for the salvation of sinners. They not merely feel for them; but are anxious, instrumentally, to save them. The circumstances of sinners are sufficient to justify such solicitude. The soul is defiled — condemned — the soul is immortal — of more value than worlds — it will either partake of the felicities of heaven, or become the victim of wrath in the gulf of perdition — it must live forever! Rom. 9 : 1, etc.; 10 : 1.

III. Abraham's solicitude was *combined with fervent and importunate prayer*. The account in the context is interesting. He prayed more than once. — He wrestled in prayer. He filled his mouth with arguments, etc., that they might be spared.

Christians also by the wretchedness of man, by the state of their unconverted friends, relatives, husbands, wives, parents, or children, must be brought to the throne of grace, to plead with God on their behalf. They must go there more than once — persevere — watch unto prayer.

Prayer must be combined with *action* or the use of appropriate means, to effect the salvation of men. We must warn, advise, teach, preach Christ as the sufficient and enriching Saviour.

Prayer must be attended with *faith and hope*. "Peradventure," said Abraham. God is able to effect great things by his word, Spirit, providence, and other agents. Let us never expect miracles. Leave the matter with him. Commit your labors into his hands. "All things are possible to him who believes," if his faith be properly grounded, and according with his holy will.

IV. God will favorably regard the prayers of his people. In the case of Abraham, if ten righteous persons had been found, Sodom would have been spared — a proof that God will answer prayer.

God loves his people, and will regard their prayers. See v. 19. He is their Almighty Father, and will listen to the cries of his children. For evidence of it, refer to *the Divine invitations to pray — the numerous promises he has made to hear prayer — and the examples of those who have prayed successfully*.

V. Saints are the salt of the earth, for whose sakes the judgments of God are often averted. Isa. 1: 9; Matt. 5 : 13-16. Ten, only ten righteous persons would have preserved Sodom.

It is the piety — the love for souls — the holy action — the fervent prayers, etc., that preserve a people, etc. What would become of Britain, its drunkards, its lascivious, its sensualists, etc. etc., if ten righteous persons were not to be found in it?

VI. It is an awful thing sometimes when the intercessions of God's people do not prevail. It was so with the inhabitants of Sodom. It will be so with the incorrigible and wilfully impenitent, who say, "Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways!"

APPLICATION.

1. What encouragement have God's people to pray!
2. Prayer is confined to the present world, and must be done here, or not at all. No prayers for the dead.
3. Learn the value of Christians. Sinners despise them, but God says, "Ye are the salt of the earth."

XXIX.—HEAVENLY REST.

"For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance which the Lord your God giveth you." — DEUT. 12 : 9.

SOME knowledge of heaven is necessary. Without this we could have no desire after it, no sympathy with it, no preparation for it. But our acquaintance with it here is very imperfect. After all the development of inspired truth, it doth not yet appear what we shall be; it is a glory that *is to be* revealed. "Eye hath not seen," etc. — It must have been cheering to the Israelites, amid the perils of the wilderness, to know that they were, under the guidance of God, gradually nearing the land of Canaan, where they would enjoy rest. The wilderness with its toils and privations, was unfavorable to Divine worship, and therefore Moses, in the preceding verses, tells them that on their arrival in the promised land, they would worship God without such inconvenience, ver. 5-8. — So it is with Christians now; their worship, their spiritual enjoyment, are frequently interrupted by adverse circumstances; but when they come to "the rest," their worship will be pure and uninterrupted.

I. THE NATURE OF HEAVENLY REST. It is called "*the rest and the inheritance.*"

1. It is a *promised rest*.

Canaan was promised to the Israelites again and again, and they were now going on to possess it, Gen. 35 : 12, etc. — Heaven is promised to believers, Heb. 4 : 9, 11; John 14 : 1, etc. The Lord knows that his people cannot be happy in this world, so full of evil, and therefore he has promised, and provided for them a rest. They are "heirs according to the promise;" "heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Tit. 3 : 7; Rom. 8 : 17.

2. This rest is *the purchase of the Redeemer, and the result of his mediatorial conquests.*

The Israelites entered Canaan through the intervention of God. He rescued them from Egypt, conducted and guided them by his Omnipotence through the desert, and at length brought them to the land of promise. All was effected by Divine power. — So believers are saved by Omnipotent grace. From the cross of Christ, they received their *meetness* for the heavenly inheritance! On that cross he became their

surety, atoned for their sins, and procured for them a righteousness which hides all their natural deformity. He broke down the middle wall of partition, and gave access to God in heaven. He spoiled principalities and powers, and triumphantly entered Paradise as the fore-runner of his people; there he waits to receive them, and to crown them with glory. "To him that overcometh," etc. Rev. 3: 21. Glorious thought! my crown of glory was purchased by the crown of thorns, etc. [Amplify.] Rev. 5: 12; 7: 10.

3. It will be a rest from all evil.

1. From all temptation to sin. So long as man lives on earth, he has various incitements to sin, enemies external and internal, all plotting his ruin, and instigating him to renounce his allegiance to Christ. How numerous are the sources of temptation! The depraved heart—worldly pleasure, amusements—the cheerful boon associate or friend—the intoxicating cup as the relief of pain or calamity—the evil heart of unbelief—the flesh lusting against the Spirit, etc. Yes, the child of God is constantly inhaling infected air; living in an atmosphere impregnated with death—nearly every step is surrounded by some hidden snare. No sooner does he embark to the land of his Father in heaven, than his frail bark is in danger of some hidden quicksand, or sunken rock, etc.

But in heaven there are no more incitements to sin, no more snares set for his fall, no more painful trials for his virtue, nor evil examples to lead him astray. There the eye shall never behold, and the ear never hear, vanity—the tongue shall never deceive, and the heart never misgive, the aged will never seduce the inexperienced, nor the oppressor bear down the weak. Poverty shall not tempt to injustice, nor wealth lead the possessor to forget God. Nothing shall exist there to excite sinful passions, nothing to awaken unhallowed desires. The atmosphere of that region is salubrious, the language of that country is pure, the conduct of its inhabitants is righteous. There is nothing to hurt or destroy in that holy mountain.

(2.) It will be a rest from all sin. A depraved heart is the fruitful source of all the misery existing in the world—the source of all defilement, of all immoral action, of all anguish and remorse, and of exposure to endless ruin. Were the heart pure, this world would be a paradise. Though believers are regenerated, yet sin frequently distresses them.

But in heaven sin shall be done away. The emancipated soul shall be restored to the light, the full liberty and purity of a son of God. "The spirits of just men are made perfect," and freed from all "spot or wrinkle" when they reach Mount Zion. Angelic natures may possess more enlarged and more exalted capacities, but not purer natures, than the glorified saints. All the remains of sin, and the dregs of corruption, are left far and forever behind. No condemning conscience is found there—no unhallowed appetites are found there—no disordered affections exist there—no vestige of evil is found there. Every child of God is pure, as Christ is pure—is perfect, as his Father in heaven is perfect. — Child of mortality, heir of corruption, what will be thy feelings when thou shalt rest in heaven from all the effects of sin?—"The wicked cease from troubling," etc.

3. It will be a *rest from all the temporal ills of our mortal condition*. This world is a valley of tears. Poverty of circumstances, induced, it may be, by personal or relative affliction—by want of occupation, or deficient remuneration for the labor of the head or the hands—the failure of well-concerted schemes of business, by the injustice or insolvency of others—bodily and family affliction, bereavements most affecting. These are some of the bitter waters of which the Christian has to drink; and though they may act as a necessary cause of discipline, yet they are painful, and cause the distressed to say, “O that I had wings,” etc. — Death too is a foe that distresses the mind by gloomy apprehensions.

But all the ills of mortality are in yonder temple of rest, as waters that are poured out, or as the dreams of a winter night. A cold countenance, a diseased frame, a sorrowful heart, are not seen within the gates of the holy city. No wearisome nights, no restless days of pain, no anxious cares and heavy disappointments, are there. No persecutions for conscience’ sake, no painful separations that agonize the heart, no bitter lamentations over the loss of relatives dear to the soul, no parents bewailing the death of their offspring, or their sinful departure from God, are there. “God shall wipe away all tears,” etc. Rev. 21: 4.

4. *This rest will be glorious.*

This will appear if we consider the *place*—heaven, the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of God, the “better country,” Rev. 21; if we consider residents, Deity, angels, etc., etc.; if we consider the employments—with extended capacity to study the most wondrous themes, creation, redeeming love, immortality, communion with Deity and immortal spirits; then there will be ecstatic enjoyment, from the reception of heaven’s light, emanations from God himself, the unravelling of hitherto perplexing mysteries—the enjoyment of a capacity that will never tire or droop, but always be excited and increasing in vigor.

5. *This rest will be complete and eternal.*

Canaan was to be a perpetual dwelling-place to Israel and their posterity, but conditionally. Hence the promise to Abraham, “To thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever.” The conditions were violated. Witness the dispersion of the Jews! — But the heirs of heavenly rest having entered heaven shall never go out. See Rev. 3: 12. It is “the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.” “An inheritance which is incorruptible,” etc. — The fairest earthly inheritance must soon be relinquished. The possessor of the largest and most fertile domains, may say, as he surveys them, “These hills will rejoice, these vales will sing, and these trees will flourish for another, but not for me.” Were the saints to be driven from the paradise of God! were they to fall from that perfection in holiness to which Divine grace hath exalted them in heaven, then Jesus would not be solicitous about their welfare. But this cannot be; the Lamb in the midst of the throne is the guardian of their eternal security. The very thought of quitting their inheritance would make heaven doleful; its hills of frankincense would lose their fragrance; the flowers of paradise would blossom to them in vain, and they would feel themselves incapable of relishing its enjoyments — But the saints shall reign forever and ever in that kingdom which can never be moved.

II. THAT BELIEVERS ARE NOT YET COME TO THIS REST. "For ye are not as yet come," etc.

1. This is very evident; for you are yet in the body, in a world of trouble. Before you enter heaven, you have much to do, much to suffer, and many foes to encounter.

2. As you are not yet come to the rest, submit to the will of God — put up with inconvenience; be patient, establish your hearts.

3. Though not come to it, you have foretastes of it, many drops before the shower.

4. Desire it, hope for it, esteem it above all the possessions of earth. This will prove the heavenly origin of your spiritual life.

5. You are not yet come to it, but you are preparing for it. You feel the work of God in you—it is progressing. You are animated with the prospect. Follow on to know the Lord. Go to his house—to prayer—to the Bible, and catch the breezes that come from Canaan's hills.—Pant after foretastes.

6. You are not come to it; no, *you have yet to die*—to pass the valley—to cross the river. Pray for grace to suit your dying hour. Look beyond the valley, across the river. Behold the shining ones on the other side! They bid you come; and Jesus, the conqueror of death, says, "Fear not!" Relying upon him, you will triumph amid the swellings of Jordan, you will come to the desired haven, and open your eyes to behold the glories of your "rest" and "inheritance."

Finally, remember your future glory is all of grace. It is "the rest and the inheritance which the Lord your God giveth you."

XXX.—CHRIST THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD.

"And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."—1 JOHN 4 : 14.

THE subject of the Apostolic testimony is infinitely important and interesting. It is the salvation of the world by the coming and mediation of Jesus Christ—an achievement regarded by angelic powers as invested with sublime and everlasting interest. At the incarnation, they accounted it their highest honor to announce his approach; with the greatest avidity they ministered to him in subsequent scenes—in the garden—on the cross—at the tomb; and formed his escort to glory. Eph. 3 : 10; 1 Pet. 1 : 12. ——— If angels, who never needed salvation, are thus interested in this subject, surely rebellious man, whom it so much concerns, ought to hail it with rapture.

I. THE OBJECT OF SALVATION: — "*The world.*"

1. The world is *degenerate and fallen*. Man was created pure and happy: but sin has rendered him filthy and miserable.

2. The world is *guilty*. Men are not the subject of a few frailties

and imperfections only, as pride and self-flattery pretend, but are considered as *conspirators and rebels* against God.

There is a principle of rooted hostility against God: men, by nature, are his enemies; and they show it in every way they can. Rom. 8:7.

3. The world is *condemned and accursed*. Gal. 3:10, 22. And oh, what is implied in that curse! Not the death of the body; not temporal afflictions merely—but endless perdition.

4. The world is *helpless*. From that curse none can be delivered by human expedient, device, or effort. The law can do nothing for the sinner; all is fear and darkness.

II. THAT CHRIST IS THE DIVINELY-APPOINTED AGENT TO SAVE THE WORLD. "The Father sent his Son."

Christ is related to the Father in the most endearing manner. He is the Son of God, his own Son, his only Son. John 1:14; Heb. 1:3.

Great stress is laid on his being the Son of God: though we can draw no parallel between the Divine and human sonships, yet they agree in this—that they are amongst the greatest of all gifts. — This term denotes how precious he was in the esteem of his Father, and how inestimable was his obedience. — Though a Son, yet learned he obedience. This Sonship gave efficacy to his sacrifice; it was the blood of Jesus Christ *his Son*. Hence the dignity too of his priesthood. Heb. 4:14; 1 John 1:7.

The person sent was the highest being in the universe—*divine*. Superior to Moses, the prophets, and every other messenger of God. Superior to angels. Heb. 1:1-4; 3:3; Phil. 2:5-9.

The Father sent his Son to become incarnate—to ally himself to our nature—to suffer and die. He could not have shed atoning blood without becoming incarnate, Heb. 2:14-18.

Therefore, he was the only qualified person to save fallen man. "The Father sent him." His credentials were divine.

III. THE DESIGN OF HIS DELEGATION. "To be the Saviour of the world."

Sublime and benevolent object! John 3:16. How different from that of the warrior, who goes forth to invade, to destroy, to shed blood, to conquer! etc.

1. He sent his Son as a *Prophet*. What darkness he dispersed—what light he shed abroad! Never had divine truths appeared so lucid before. What a disclosure of immortality!

2. He sent his Son as an *example*. In his life and conduct he embodied the law. Never before had there been an example so perfect and lovely. His perfection of character was essential to his office as the great High-priest of our salvation, Heb. 7:26, as well as to be the model for the imitation of his followers. 1 Pet. 2:21.

3. He sent him as *the Atoning Priest*. To endure the penalty due to transgression. It is specially by this that he appears as the

Saviour of the world. See Isa. 53 : 4-6 ; Dan. 9 : 24 ; Rom. 3 : 24-26 ; 5 : 6-8, etc. etc. His sacrifice was perfect—it was accepted—it was free—magnificent, and infinitely benevolent.

4. He sent him as a *conquering King*. He conquered Satan—sin—and the grave. He conquers, by his word and Spirit, the rebellious hearts of sinners, and makes them his friends. He will conquer this world and *save it*. The desert shall yet blossom as the rose. This earth is destined to be the theatre where he shall display his glory.

IV. THE EVIDENCE OF HIS DELEGATION TO EFFECT THE SALVATION OF THE WORLD. “We have seen,” etc.

Jesus Christ was not an impostor. Christianity is not a cheat. One so eminently good, benevolent, and disinterested as Christ was, could not have been an impostor ; and Christianity cannot be a cheat, as its tendency is not only to bless, but to expose all hypocrisy and selfishness. The Apostles heartily and unscrupulously testified of Christ, because they had “seen” and heard him. See 1 John 1 : 1-3.

1. They saw that his Messiahship, in its teaching and various acts, corresponded with the *prophecies* of the Old Testament.

2. They heard the *approval* of him by *Jehovah* from the most excellent glory. See 2 Pet. 1 : 16-21.

3. They saw his *miracles*, heard his *teaching*, and saw the wondrous *effects* of both on the populace.

4. They were witnesses of his *personal character*, and observed his *devotional spirit*, not only in their society, but in his private retirement. A being so devotional could not have been a deceiver.

5. In giving their testimony, they were so fully persuaded of the divinity of his mission that they were willing to *sacrifice* ease, interest, and life itself ; and they actually suffered martyrdom for their testimony.

Lastly. The *continuance of Christianity* to the present time proves its divinity. No force has been able to arrest its progress.

XXXI.—THE CHRISTIAN'S REST.

“There remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God.” — HEB. 4 : 9.

THE privileges of the Gospel are a source of true comfort and joy. But these enjoyments are but the foretastes of the Christian's rest, when every evil peculiar to this mortal life will be annihilated, and the exceeding and eternal weight of glory be revealed. — The Hebrews, in their proneness to return to Judaism, resembled their forefathers in the wilderness, who wanted to return to Egypt, after they had commenced their journey to Canaan. Ps. 95 : 7-11. Paul tells the He-

brews that they, as well as their ancestors, had a Canaan in prospect, and, like them, were in danger of losing it through unbelief. In the beginning God rested from all his works. Israel rested in the promised land, from Egypt's bondage and the toils of the wilderness; the Church shall have rest in her millennium state; and in heaven, the palace of the great King, "there remaineth a rest," etc.

I. THE CHARACTER OF THOSE FOR WHOM HEAVENLY REST IS PREPARED. "The people of God."

Whatever happiness Christ will confer in heaven, *it will be confined to believers*, and they only will or can enjoy it. As some of the Israelites never entered Canaan through their unbelief, so it was in the Apostolic age, so it is now, and likely to be in the best of times.

1. The people of God have been *Divinely enlightened* to perceive their lost and perishing state—to feel that they have no help or deliverance in themselves—to perceive that salvation is in Christ alone.

2. The people of God have *believed in Christ for salvation*. Distrusting themselves, they have trusted in God for mercy through the atoning blood of the Redeemer. John 3 : 14–16; Acts 16 : 31.

3. The people of God *have been renovated in heart and life*. "New creatures." See Rom. 6 : 17, 18, etc.

4. The people of God are *admitted to all the privileges of adopted children*. "I will be a father to you." See Eph. 2 : 11–13, etc.; 1 John 3 : 1.

5. The people of God have already, *in this world, entered into rest*, and the enjoyment of rest here is the precursor of glorious rest hereafter. "We which have believed do enter into rest." Before they knew Christ they were strangers to rest, but Jesus said to them, "Come unto me, all ye that labor," etc.

That they enjoy rest *now* is evident from enlightening, redeeming, and regenerating grace. They have rest of *conscience*. Guilt is removed by the blood of Christ. It is freed from the torment of fear, etc., Rom. 5 : 1, etc.——Rest in the *understanding*. Darkness has fled, doubt vanished, no longer in confusion about the truth. They know whom they have believed.——Rest as it regards the *passions and appetites*. These are mortified through the Spirit, and placed under restraint. Rest from *anxiety* as to their state in life. Others are devoured by anxious solicitude, saying, "What shall we eat," etc., but they are "careful for nothing," Phil. 4 : 6. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee."

II. THE REST WHICH REMAINETH FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

The present rest of believers is nothing compared with future rest. However favorable the voyage, they are now on the boisterous, treacherous ocean; they are looking out for their native shore, and will soon enter the harbor; "Then are they glad because they are quiet, so he *bringeth them into their desired haven*," Ps. 107 : 30. At death we *are told the righteous enter into rest*, Rev. 14 : 13.

1. *The scene of this rest will be heaven*, the glorious region of immortality, where God and all holy beings dwell. A place adapted for immortal existence.

2. This rest will be enjoyed *by both body and soul*. Though at death, the spirit immediately enters into rest, yet at the resurrection, the body shall be reunited to the soul, and both shall partake of endless felicity.

3. It will be *a rest from conflict*. The evil heart of unbelief shall afflict no more. Satan shall tempt no more. The world shall fascinate and ensnare no more. Darkness shall no more struggle with the light, or faith with unbelief. The flesh will no longer lust against the Spirit, etc. Nothing remains of their conflicts, but the grateful remembrance of the hand that sustained and delivered them.

4. It will be *a rest from all suffering*. In circumstances—in body—in mind. Hear it, ye afflicted, "The inhabitant shall never say, I am sick." Hear it, ye bereaved ones, "They die no more." Hear it, ye sons of poverty, "They shall hunger no more," etc.

5. It will be *a rest from labor*. Here man by the sweat of his brow strives to earn a subsistence. Here the mind anxiously devises, schemes, etc. All induces fatigue—but the drudgery of earth will be exchanged for the glorious service of heaven. "And his servants shall serve him" without weariness; for the service will be congenial to their immortal powers, and those powers will be fully equal to their work.

6. It will be *a rest from fear*—fear of sin, fear of losing the grace of God, the fear of death, the fear of hell.

7. A rest from *mental debility and darkness*. The capacity will there be enlarged and shall forever enlarge.

Lastly, it is *certain and everlasting*.

Certain. "It is the hope of eternal life which God has promised," etc. How different from the hopes of earth! Some may anticipate coming ease, but they have no security. The mariner, full of hope, commences his voyage, but he returns not. The soldier is expected from the campaign, but eyes have failed in looking for him. The adventurer who has raised the expectation of a nation, returns no more. — But this rest is as certain as the promise, the oath, the infinite and immutable love of God can make it. John 17 : 24.

It is *everlasting*. Nothing is permanent here. All is eternally permanent yonder. Count the sands of the sea, the leaves of the forest, the drops of the ocean, they are nothing to eternity. Survey the starry hosts of heaven, imagine their number. All these images fail. "The wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars forever and ever."

XXXII.—THE MORTAL CHANGE.

"Thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away."—JOB 14 : 20.

MAN has nothing to boast of, for his foundation is the dust. He has nothing to be proud of, for "all flesh is grass," etc. Man is now laboring to make himself attractive, and is attracted by others. But this will soon cease. "Thou changest," etc. What an affecting view of man's state by sin! Created in the image of God, sin has marred the beauty of both body and mind. Contemplate,

I. THE AFFECTING CHANGE. "Thou changest his countenance."

Probably the text refers to the custom of *covering the face*, when a criminal was condemned, and then sending him away to execution. Esth. 7 : 8.

The "countenance" is an interesting part of the human structure, frequently indicating by its expressions the various emotions of the mind. It often expresses hilarity, intelligence, beauty, fortitude, and majesty. The mind shining through the countenance captivates and commands.

The impression produced by the countenance on the minds of others is sometimes strong and lasting, and especially in cases of reciprocal affection, and in families. Nothing is so cheering as when the countenance of one friend or relative meets that of another. "As iron sharpeneth iron," etc., Prov. 27 : 17.

But however pleasing, fascinating, and prepossessing the countenance may be, it will soon be changed. Its beauty shall be marred; its bloom shall decay; it shall become pale and emaciated. "Thou changest his countenance."

1. *By sickness.* By bodily disease, wasting and consuming. When a man has been a few days sick, what a change in his countenance! Protracted affliction especially changes his countenance.

2. *By trials and disappointments.* These oppress and corrode the mind. Mental grief soon appears on the countenance. Protracted grief is like water that wears the stones. Job 14 : 19. Then the countenance soon loses its juvenile fairness, beauty, and fulness.


3. *By the terrors of conscience.* Then the countenance betrays guilt, gloom, agony, painful foreboding, and guilty remorse. Witness Cain——Ahab——Belshazzar, etc.

4. *By age.* Compare the countenance of an aged man with that of his youth. Where is the roseate hue, the carmine tinge, etc., now? Where the muscular energy, the athletic strength, and the graceful figure, now?

☞ All these mutations are but the precursors of the final changing of his countenance.

5. *By death.* "Thou changest his countenance" then! What a change! Look now at the pale, cold, and rigid form. The eye sparkles no more; the tongue pleases no more; the face beams with intelligence no more, and no more entrances by its beauty and loveliness. All is changed now.

The countenance which was majestic and awful, is now mean, and despicable; that which was once lovely and amiable is now ghastly and frightful. That form was perhaps once adored, but now its adorers say, "Bury my dead out of my sight."

 The approach of death will make the strongest and stoutest to change countenance; the most merry, smiling countenance to look grave and serious; and the most daring countenance to look pale and timorous.

II. THE SOLEMN EVENT. "And sendest him away."

1. This is *the effect of sin*, Rom. 5 : 12 ; 6 : 23.

2. Thou "*sendest his body away*" to the grave. The house appointed for all living. To become the prey of worms—to abide there till the resurrection.

3. Thou "*sendest*" his soul "*away*" into eternity. And the quality of that eternity will be according to the deeds done in the body.

4. Thou "*sendest*" him "*away*" irrevocably. He cannot resist thine imperative decree.—He cannot return. See v. 7-12.

5. Thou "*sendest*" him "*away*" from all the means of grace. "As the tree falleth," etc.

6. Thou "*sendest*" him "*away*" from all human enjoyments. From his *friends, possessions*, etc.

APPLICATION.

1. Let this text check pride and presumption.
2. Let it induce preparation for the final change.
3. Let us value Christ the conqueror of death, the resurrection and the life.

XXXIII.—SAINTS COMPARED TO PALM TREES.

A METAPHORICAL SKETCH.

"The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree."—Ps. 92 : 12.—See also Song 7 : 7, 8.

How wonderful are the transformations of Divine grace!—The heart of man is sterile, and full of noxious weeds and evil fruit. But the influences of the Holy Spirit render it fruitful, and lovely, and excellent.—The choicest figures are employed by the sacred penmen to represent the transforming influence of the Spirit upon the heart of man. Hence Christ said, John 15 : 1, 5. David said, Ps. 1 : 3 ; 92 : 12-14. Isaiah said, 44 : 3, 4. Hosea said, 14 : 5-7.

The Palm is a noble tree, perhaps so named from its straight growth, excelling in that respect every other tree. It sometimes rises a hundred feet, and is one of the grandest and most beautiful trees of the vegetable kingdom. Its fruit is the date, which grows in clusters, and in taste is sweet and agreeable. In Egypt, Arabia, and Persia, many of the inhabitants subsist almost entirely on its fruit. Its leaves and wood are of the greatest utility for domestic and other purposes. For more than a hundred years it maintains its vigor and beauty, and bears yearly fifteen or twenty clusters of dates, each of them weighing fifteen or twenty pounds. This tree produced the Assyrians, in the time of Herodotus, bread, wine, and honey.

The righteous may be compared to a Palm tree in the following respects:—

I. The Palm tree is an excellent tree, beautiful to behold, and all its branches shoot upwards, none growing out of the side, as in other trees.

The righteous here compared to a Palm tree, are a choice and excellent people; their spiritual nature, the graces of the spirit in them, and manifested by their conduct, are beautiful to behold. Christ loves them, angels view them with admiration, etc. — Their affections, like the branches of the Palm, ascend and are fixed on things above, Col. 3 : 1, 2. They grow heavenward. They do not shoot out their branches, or affections, to this low wicked world; they grow high in grace, and in fellowship with God.

II. The Palm tree grows in the purest soil. It will not grow and flourish in filthy places, like some trees. Water is particularly necessary to its prosperity. Its presence, travellers assure us, indicates that water is near, and may be obtained from springs, or by digging. Accordingly Israel found twelve springs and seventy palm trees at Elim, Ex. 15 : 27 ; Num. 33 : 9. The more they are exposed to the sun, the quicker is their growth.

The righteous flourish most in a pure soil, where the Gospel is preached in its purity. They are planted in a choice garden, Christ's blessed vineyard, in the courts of the Lord's house, v. 13, 14. They have been transplanted from the sterile world, where no water of salvation is, and are now planted in God's vineyard, where the streams of Divine influence from the fountain of grace, refresh and make them holy and happy.

III. The Palm tree is very straight and lofty, always growing upright. Jeremiah, ch. 10 : 5, speaking of the idols that were carried in procession, says, they were upright as the Palm tree.

The righteous are sincere, upright in heart and conversation. In their natural state they are rough, knotty, and crooked, yet grace rectifies these irregularities. They now "walk uprightly," walk in the light, as "the children of the light." They love mercy, do justice, and walk humbly with their God. They "have their conversation honest among the Gentiles."

IV. The Palm tree when young is a very weak plant; so weak as

to require support. And therefore *Pliny* says, they usually plant three or four of them together, which unite, embrace, and grow to one another, forming one strong, lofty, and beautiful tree.

Believers, when converted, are very weak and helpless, and not able to maintain their course without the aid and encouragement of their brethren. But believers are "helpers of each other's joy." 1 Cor. 1 : 24. They love as brethren; the wise and strong have compassion on the weak and ignorant; they encourage the feeble and timid, and "bear one another's burdens." They "strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees," Isa. 35 : 3, 4. Union is essential to Church fellowship, and believers are united in the holy bonds of love. Union makes the Church glorious in the estimation of all the wise and good. See Ps. 133 : 1, 2; Eph. 4 : 3, 13.

V. The Palm tree is an evergreen. It is crowned at its top with a large tuft of spring leaves, about four feet long, which never fall off, but always continue in the same flourishing verdure. It is green in winter, as well as in summer.

And David beautifully describes the prosperous and abiding spirituality of the righteous, Ps. 1 : 3. As green is the color of luxuriant vegetation, it is used as an emblem of pleasantness, prosperity, fulness of wealth, grace, or comfort. Christ is called a *green tree*, to indicate his unbounded and inexhaustible fulness of grace and vital influence, Luke 23 : 31; Hosea 14 : 8. Believers are like green trees, retaining amid every opposition the Spirit of grace, and growing in grace and good works. "I am like a green olive tree in the house of God," says David, Ps. 52 : 8. Believers are said to be fed in the green pastures, full of pleasant and nutritious food, Ps. 23 : 2. Being thus planted by the river side, *their leaf shall not wither*. They maintain their profession, not only in the summer of prosperity, but also in the winter of adversity. Contrast ver. 7, with ver. 12, 13.

VI. The Palm tree is distinguished for great fruitfulness. Its fruit is abundant, pleasant, medicinal, and exhilarating. Surely, saith *Pliny*, new dates, as they come from the tree, are so delicious, that they are eaten most greedily.

The righteous have not only the greenness of profession, but also the fruits of the Spirit. Their conversation is full of good fruit; their spiritual efforts bear fruit for the good of man, and redound to the glory of God. "The fruit of the Spirit is love," etc. Gal. 5 : 22. "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life," etc. Prov. 11 : 30. The fruit of righteousness is a pleasant fruit. It distinguishes the people of God throughout their course, and they are frequently distinguished for fruitfulness in old age. "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age," etc. ver. 14.

VII. The Palm tree grows and flourishes under heavy pressure or weight. It grows, the naturalists say, when it is most pressed down. It will not be pressed, bound downwards, or grow crooked, though heavy weights be laid upon it.

The righteous shall flourish like the Palm tree, though trials may threaten to crush them down. Satan labors to do it, sin struggles against them; the world frowns upon them; yet "the righteous shall

hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall grow stronger and stronger." Pharaoh extremely burdened and oppressed the children of Israel by their cruel task masters, but the more he afflicted them, the more they multiplied, Ex. 1 : 11, 12.

Persecution cannot annihilate Christianity. It never has done it, never will do it. Notwithstanding its oppressions, cruelties, and bloodshed, it still lives with all its elements of increasing power. — Persecutions have been beneficial to the righteous, increasing their spirituality and happiness, Rom. 5 : 3 ; 8 : 35-37 ; 1 Pet. 1 : 7 ; 4 : 12, 13, 16 ; Matt. 5 : 10.

VIII. The branches of the Palm tree were used as emblems of victory and rejoicing. They were carried before conquerors in their triumphs, both by believers and idolaters. The reason given by Plutarch, why the symbol was so adopted by the idolaters, is the nature of the wood, which so powerfully resists recumbent pressure. But more enlightened nations, by bearing palm branches after a victory, designed to acknowledge the Supreme Author of their success and prosperity, and to carry on their thoughts to the Divine Light, the great Conqueror over sin and death. See 12 : 13 ; Rev. 7 : 9.

The righteous are as Palm branches in Christ's hand—a sign of that glorious victory which he has obtained over sin, Satan, the world, death, and eternal wrath. When he said, "It is finished!" then those foes were slain. — The righteous are compared to Palm trees because Christ has not only himself conquered for them, but he will enable them to conquer every foe ; and, in heaven, as the symbol of his triumph, they shall "have palms in their hands."

Lastly, in the holy place, or sanctuary of the Temple (the emblem of Christ's body), Palm trees alternately mingled with cherubim were engraved on the walls and the doors, 1 Kings 6 : 29, to indicate its heavenly connection, and its being honored with the ministration of angels. See Ezek. 41 : 18-20, 25, 26.

Angels have ever been the guardians of the Church. They watch over the righteous, who are compared to Palm trees, Ps. 91 : 11, 12. They attended Christ in his ministry — they will attend the saints during their pilgrimage on earth, and finally attend them as their escort to glory. Heb. 1 : 14.

APPLICATION.

- 1st. Be thankful that you are the subjects of transforming grace.
- 2d. Endeavor, by Divine help, to maintain the characteristics figuratively represented by the Palm tree.

XXXIV. — GRATITUDE FOR DIVINE MERCIES.

"Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation." — Ps. 68 : 19.

A REVIEW of the Divine mercies will always produce gratitude. — Christian character and grateful acknowledgments are ever identical. Gratitude is the effusion of the Christian's heart while he

lives, and it will be the emanation of his soul in eternity when he sings the song of Moses and the Lamb.

I. THE CHARACTER OF GOD. "The God of our salvation." In respect to temporal and spiritual deliverance he is often styled "the God of our salvation." As such

1st. He *commiserated us in our need of salvation*. He "so loved," pitied, and commiserated the state of man. John 3 : 16.

2d. He *originated and devised the plan of salvation*. His infinite compassion called into requisition his infinite wisdom to form the plan of mercy.

3d. He *appointed the Agent of salvation*—even his only-begotten Son. Sent him to be a sacrifice—to endure the penalty of a broken law, etc. 1 Tim. 1 : 15 ; Eph. 1 : 7.

4th. He *grants the means of salvation*. His word—the preaching of the Gospel — Christian sabbaths and ordinances.

5th. He *applies salvation to the soul by his own immediate agency*. By his Spirit, which convinces, etc.

6th. He *will ultimately and forever receive all the honors of salvation*. By the great number of the redeemed which no man can number, he will be adored as the "God of salvation."

II. WHAT HE DOES FOR HIS PEOPLE: "Daily loadeth us with benefits."

"With benefits" is not in the original. A better translation would have been, "Blessed be the Lord, who supports us day by day." The word translated "*load*," signifies *to lift, to bear up, support, or to bear a burden for another*.

The following particulars will not be improper : It is nevertheless true that God

1st. *Daily loads us with benefits*. Temporal benefits by which life is sustained. Intellectual benefits—the continuance of our intellectual faculties. National benefits ; what nation is like ours ? Civil and religious benefits. "The lines are fallen," etc.

2d. *Spiritual benefits*. To this there is reference, ver. 18, which the Apostle applies to the finished work, triumphant ascension, and gracious communications of Christ. Eph. 4 : 8. His atoning death—his advocacy for his people at the right hand of God is a daily *benefit*, precious and unspeakable ! This *lifts up, supports*, and sustains the mind. Christ *bears our load or burden* of sin and guilt for us.

"Thou hast received gifts for men, even for the rebellious also," ver. 18. Paul says, "He gave gifts." He has dispensed them, and he will dispense them. Kings at their coronation, conquerors in their triumphs, have scattered silver and gold. The pretended successor of Peter at Rome, scatters copper money among the people when he obtains the popedom, because the Apostle had said, "Silver and gold have I none." But, "blessed be," etc. Eph. 1 : 8. Think of the number of these bless-

ings. Pardon—peace—access—faith, hope, joy—the Spirit—promises, etc. etc. — And they are “*for the rebellious!*” For a Magdalene—a malefactor—murderous Jews—bloody persecutors—and filthy idolaters.

3d. The translation conveys the idea of *daily succor and support*. This is required, and a rich blessing it is in *adversity*—in *temptation*—in bodily or relative *affliction*—under *every trial*. Delightful then to hear God say, “Cast thy burden,” etc. Ps. 55 : 22. “My grace,” etc.

4th. It is correct too that *he loads us with his favors*. So many, so weighty are the gifts of God’s bounty to us, that he *loads* us with them; he pours out blessings (especially to those of his grace), till there is no room to receive them, Mal. 3 : 10; Ps. 23 : 5.

5th. *His munificence is constant*. Never suspended; it is always flowing, Lam. 3 : 22, 23. “I will never leave,” etc.

III. THE RETURN WHICH THE PEOPLE OF GOD SHOULD MAKE.
“Blessed,” etc.

The term means to extol, exalt, praise, or speak well of a person. To bless the Lord is to speak good of his name. “All thy works praise thee, and thy saints bless thee.” Ps. 145 : 10. Even the inanimate creation, the works of God, manifest his attributes and his praises; but his saints do more, they bless his name. They dwell on the attributes and glories of God with inward delight. “We delight, O Lord, to see thy name honored in the world, yea, exalted above all; we triumph in the perfections of thy nature, and give thanks to thee for all thy goodness.”

They wish, and pray, and strive that his name may be honored. “May the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, be forever ascribed to him! May all generations do homage to him, and make his name glorious in the earth!”

A disposition to praise God is a most invaluable treasure. He who has it, has an inward enjoyment akin to heavenly blessedness, and which renders the celestial land the most desirable and glorious spot in the vast domains of Jehovah.

A true Christian will,

1st. Praise the Lord sincerely.

2d. Praise him affectionately. Be it the effusions of a heart tuned by Divine love.

3d. Praise him constantly. “I will bless the Lord at all times.”

4th. Let praise be practical. By holy efforts to promote his glory in the world.

XXXV. — PRAYER.

"He shall pray unto God, and he will be favorable unto him; and he shall see his face with joy; for he will render unto man his righteousness." — Job 33 : 26.

PRAYER is an important duty, and absolutely necessary. There can be no religion without prayer. It distinguishes a Christian from the time of his spiritual birth, when angels say, "Behold, he prayeth," to the time of his dissolution, when he himself prays, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Prayer is the Christian's spiritual breath. Without it he cannot live in peace; without it he cannot die in triumph.

Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air;
His watchword at the gate of death;
He enters Heaven by prayer.

I. THE NATURE OF PRAYER.

Prayer is the presentation of our wants to God, and fervent petitions for his gracious regard, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1st. *Prayer is necessary.* It will appear so, if we consider man as a *convinced sinner*, as a Christian—and a pilgrim of earth journeying to heaven.

(1.) *As a convinced sinner.* Conviction of sin is alarming; it begets inquiry; it leads to prayer. Luke 18 : 13; Acts 2 : 37; 16 : 27, etc. God employs various means to convince of sin. The word—the Spirit—Divine visitations, etc. In the context we read that God sometimes rouses to sensibility by visions of the night, v. 14, 15; also by personal affliction, v. 19. Then the sinner feels himself burdened with sin, guilt, and condemnation, and is anxious for pardon, etc.

(2.) *As a Christian.* He is exposed to enemies, and subjected to trials. He has arduous duties to perform, and to maintain Christian consistency of character. He is journeying to heaven, but is opposed, discouraged, etc. He is ignorant, weak, etc.

2. *Prayer must be penitential.* See Ps. 51 : 17; Isa. 57 : 15. Holy grief is one of the constant residents found in a believer's heart. Sin and its awful effects are sufficient to make any one mourn.

3. *Prayer must be humble and sincere.* Humility flows from penitence, Job 42 : 2, 5, 6; 40 : 4, 5. Witness the humility of the Publican and the Prodigal.

In approaching God the believer is humbled when he compares his nothingness with God's immensity; his meanness with God's glory; his folly with God's wisdom; and his deformity with God's purity. Hence the true penitent is *sincere*. His prayer is the prayer of the heart. See 1 Sam. 1 : 13. The prayers of the formalist and the wicked are *heartless* prayers, the heart has no place in them, and they have no place in the heart. The prayers of the righteous are heart-

prayers; they are first put into the heart by God, and they rise from the heart to God.

4. *Prayer must be believing.* Matt. 21 : 22 ; John 14 : 13, 14. There must be faith in God's love, in God's power, in God's promises, in God's willingness, and in God's veracity.

Faith may be considered the wings by which prayer alone can ascend to heaven. Without these wings, prayer can never ascend higher than the lips. These wings are swifter than the eagle's. As soon as prayers are thus furnished, they mount to heaven, enter the court of the great King, and return laden with celestial treasure.

In prayer, faith rests on the mediation of Christ.

5. *Prayer must be fervent and importunate.* James 5 : 16. It is not the energy and warmth of the animal spirits, but the inwrought prayer, expressed in simple desires, regulated by the love of God.

Fervent prayer engrosses the affections, the will, and the desires. Without fervor prayers are specimens of spiritual death; they are like bodies without life. To pray is to groan, to sigh, to cry, to wrestle, and to give God no rest until he bless us.

The magnitude of the blessings required call for fervency.

II. THAT PRAYER WILL INSURE THE DIVINE REGARD.

1. *Prayer shall be answered.* "He will be favorable to Him." God is the hearer and answerer of prayer. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers." Observe,

He knows all the extent of our misery. — He has a tender sympathy in our welfare. — He has boundless resources to supply our need. — And infinite wisdom in distributing his favors.

That he answers prayer is

(1.) Proved from the testimony of his own word. Matt. 7 : 7, etc.

(2.) It is attested by the experience of his people. The Scriptures abound with examples.

Abraham prayed for Sodom, and would have been answered if ten righteous persons had been found. By prayer Jacob prevailed against Esau. By prayer Moses averted plagues from Egypt, saved Israel from Divine judgments, and obtained for them the continuance of Divine mercy. When Israel was oppressed by the Philistines, Samuel prayed, and those invaders were dispersed. Elijah prayed and was answered. James 5 : 17. Hezekiah, near to death, prayed, and fifteen years were added to his life. Sennacherib invaded his kingdom, he prayed, and in one night, an angel from the Lord destroyed 185,000 of that mighty host. Daniel and his companions, threatened with destruction, because none could interpret the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, prayed, and the dream and the explanation were discovered to him. Jonah, amid the swelling of the sea, prayed, and was delivered. On the day of Pentecost, the apostles prayed, and the place where they met was shaken, etc. Acts 1 : 14 ; 2 : 1, etc. Peter was imprisoned

by Herod, prayer opened the gates of the prison. Paul and Silas were imprisoned at Philippi, shut in the inner prison, and fast in the stocks. They prayed, and an earthquake shook the prison to its foundations, and all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosened.

2. In the context the *great blessings of salvation are promised*—they may be obtained by believing prayer. Do you ask for redemption? See v. 24. Do you ask for a renewal of heart and life? See v. 25, meaning, He shall be born a new creature, and become an *adopted* child.

He shall be *reconciled to God*, and this shall give him peace and joy: "He shall see his face with joy," or exultation, Rom. 5:1, 2, etc. That face, a sinner unpardoned cannot look upon; there is a frown upon it, but now it wears a smile.

He shall be made *righteous*. "He will render unto man his righteousness." Righteous in state, freely justified from all condemnation by faith in the finished work of the Saviour, and accounted innocent before God, and treated by him as such. Inherently righteous, being born again, etc. Practically righteous, having his fruit unto holiness, etc.

APPLICATION.

1. The mark of all real Christians. They pray. They "see his face, and are made righteous."

2. We perceive one great source of spiritual bliss. It is prayer. "It is good for me to draw near to God." Luther spent three hours every day in prayer; he said that prayer was the best book in his study. The throne of grace is our *dispensary*, where every healing medicine is prepared, our *treasury* and *asylum*, where all our riches and resources are found. Hence, Christians, you are never so happy as when you unburden your soul to God, and throw all your heart into all you utter. You understand at once what Melancthon meant when he said of Luther, — "I have overheard him in secret prayer, and he spoke as if God had been in the closet with him." O pray for this devotional spirit!

3. Behold the condescension of God in allowing sinners to address him! How honorable is such an exercise! Well might Chrysostom say,—

A monarch vested in gorgeous habiliments is far less illustrious than a kneeling suppliant ennobled and adorned by communion with God. Consider how august a privilege it is when angels are present, when Cherubim and Seraphim encircle with their blaze the throne that a mortal may approach with unrestrained confidence and converse with heaven's dread Sovereign. Oh! what honor was ever conferred like this? When a Christian stretches forth his hand to pray and invokes his God, in that moment he leaves behind him all terrestrial pursuits, and traverses on the wings of intellect the realms of light; he contemplates celestial objects only, and knows not of the present state of things during the period of his prayer, if that prayer be breathed with fervency.

4. Prayerless sinners, if you pray not, you are lost, and will be lost forever.

XXXV.—THE HEART UNITED TO FEAR GOD.

"Unite my heart to fear thy name." — PSALM 86 : 11.

NOTHING can render man truly happy but the fear of God, or true religion. Whatever a man may enjoy of this world, even though it be the dignity and wealth of royalty itself, he can have no solid bliss without the fear of God. Thus David, the king of Israel, properly estimated the matter, when he uttered this prayer, "Unite my heart," etc. — On the other hand, the fear of God is connected with every Christian enjoyment, privilege, and anticipation of eternal bliss. The rich and incalculable advantages of a holy life are sufficient to give fervent importunity in the adoption of this prayer, "Unite," etc.

I. IT IS THE DUTY AND PRIVILEGE OF A CHRISTIAN TO FEAR GOD.

If "the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him," it must be no slight honor to serve God. God has been feared in every age, by all ranks and degrees of men, who have found it pleasant and advantageous. Might point to the patriarchs, the prophets, etc. — Consider

1. *The object of Christian veneration.* "Thy name." This term denotes *God himself*, his nature as discovered to us in all his glorious perfections. It is said, "The name of the God of Jacob defend thee!" that is, May God himself defend thee!

By the names *Jehorah* and *Jah*, God conveys to us the knowledge of his absolute, eternal, and immutable essence: by the names *Lord*, *God*, we are to understand his sovereign authority: and by the names *Father*, *Son*, and *Spirit*, his essential relations.

The name of God also includes *his titles*. The first person in the Trinity is styled the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." The second, "King of kings," etc. The third, the "Comforter, the Spirit of wisdom and revelation."

The name of God implies *his perfections*. Eternity, immortality, and invisibility, are his names. Hence, called "the King eternal," etc. 1 Tim. 1 : 17. God is often named by his attributes of wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

God's name sometimes means *his worship and ordinances*. When God says he will "put his name in Jerusalem, and in the temple," it means his worship. When the priests "despised God's name," they despised his worship, and offered on the altar the blind, the lame, and the sick.

Sometimes it means *his word and will*, John 17 : 6: that is, I have revealed thy will. When the Church of Pergamos is said to "hold fast the name of Christ," it denotes that it adhered to the word and truth of Christ.

His name also signifies *his works*, Ps. 8 : 1, 2.

2. *The nature of the duty, fearing the name of the Lord.*

(1.) It is distinct from *slavish fear*, which characterizes the wicked, Rom. 8 : 15.

(2.) It is *filial fear*, induced by Divine Sonship. John 1 : 12. By the ransom of Christ, by the renovation of the Spirit, by the adoption of grace, the sinner becomes the child of God. He loves the Almighty Parent, and he fears to offend him. He fears God as a friend, and not as an enemy; as a Father, and not as a judge.

(3.) It is *reverence*. Something awful in the attributes of Deity—they inspire the mind with awe. See Gen. 28 : 17; Jer. 10 : 6, 7; Dan. 4 : 34, 35.

(4.) *Delight in his worship and ordinances.*

5.) *Hatred to sin* as offensive to him, and the pursuit of holiness as pleasing in his sight.

(6.) *Submission to his will.* Our belief, practice, and experience regulated by his word.—Submission to all his providential allotments as wise and intended for good. ✱

II. THAT THE HEART OF MAN IS NATURALLY INDISPOSED TO FEAR GOD, AND REQUIRES DIVINE POWER TO PRODUCE IT. “*Unite my heart,*” etc.

The heart is naturally disaffected towards God. It has no relish for his service, no delight in his ways. “The carnal mind,” etc. All its powers are out of course. The judgment is darkened, the will perverted, and the affections, instead of cheerfully fixing upon God the chief and infinite good, tumultuate and rebel against him.

The heart of man, while carnal, is supremely attached to other objects. It is divided, separated from God.” Its affections are scattered and divided amongst a thousand different objects. “Ephraim,” says the prophet, “is a silly dove, without heart.” “Their heart is divided.” Hosea 10 : 2. Divided between God and mammon, sin and holiness; between the trifles and the vanities of this world, and the blessedness of the next. The lives of sinners are full of inconsistencies, running into opposite extremes, and becoming everything by turns. They are halting in their opinions, inconstant in their affections, and unstable in their conduct. Sin has disjointed the whole frame of the heart, rendered it irresolute and unfixed, emptied it of everything that is good, and filled it with all manner of evil. Gen. 6 : 5; Matt. 15 : 9; Jer. 17 : 9.

Even believers constantly feel within them an evil heart prone to depart from the living God; and therefore they pray, “*Unite my heart,*” etc.

This prayer implies

1. *Sensibility.* Of natural disaffection—of wandering—of indecision—of coldness—of danger. A divided heart is a great curse; scattered affections are a miserable plague.

2. *Dependence.* The prayer is to God, who only can unite the

heart to fear him. He has promised to do it. Jer. 32 : 39; Ezek. 11 : 19. Feeling themselves helpless, they apply unto him.

3. *Detachment* from other objects as unprofitable and ruinous. Detach my heart from the world, from the creature, from sin, from vanity, etc. Destroy the spell and break the chains that bind me. Let the superlative glory of thy service eclipse the service of sin. Render carnal objects hateful and distasteful to me. Let the glories of thy eternal kingdom induce me to part with all the trifles of earth, etc. etc.

4. *Renovation*. "Create within me a clean heart," etc. Ps. 51 : 10. Fulfil thy promise; "A new heart also will I give you," Ezek. 36 : 26, 27. Renew me in the spirit of my mind; then I shall delight to fear thee. I shall have a relish for thy service. I shall delight in thy law after the inward man.

5. *Love*. There can be no real and abiding union without love. Dispose my heart to love thee as the chief among ten thousand, etc. Let thy love to me, by Christ, be shed abroad in my heart. Cause me to love thee, because thou hast first loved me. Let all the powers of my heart be collected by thy hand, and be concentrated in thee. May neither father, nor mother, nor brother, nor sister, nor houses and land, nor gold and silver, ever divert me from thee. Operate on my heart till I can say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee," etc.

6. *Sincerity*. "Unite my heart." Let my heart fear thee.

Lastly. *Decision, fixity, permanence*. Let me be unhesitating, decided, neither turning to the right hand nor to the left, but "steadfast, unmovable," etc. Like Paul, may I feel, "None of these things move me," etc., and like David, "My heart is fixed. O God, my heart is fixed!"

APPLICATION.

1. The advantages resulting from the fear of the Lord are incalculable.

2. Let all Christians pray for the application of Divine power to the heart, for nothing but heart-work can be pleasant and acceptable to God.

3. How suitable is this prayer for the penitent! Let him go to the cross for mercy, and there invoke God to unite his heart to fear him.

XXXVII.—PARTICIPATION IN CHRIST'S SACRIFICE.

"Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."—JOHN 6 : 54.

In this chapter, the great Teacher, in his intercourse with the Jews, states in most striking terms the grand design of his coming into the

world. He selects the most appropriate figures by which to represent his death as sacrificial, and faith as the means of participation in the same.—Faith in him secures spiritual life, communion with God, and the hope of endless life. Unbelief debars the soul from these incalculable advantages.

These words point out to us

I. AN IMPORTANT ACT. “Eating the flesh, and drinking the blood of Christ.”

1. *Flesh and blood mean the Sacrifice of Christ* on the cross, where his body was wounded for our sins, bruised for our iniquities, and his blood shed, for “without shedding of blood there is no remission.” Christ gives us this view of the subject in ver. 51; “And the bread that I will give is my flesh, *or life*, which I will give for the life of the world.”

This view of the passage is supported by the sacred writers who dwell upon the expiatory sacrifice of Christ. Papists absurdly take the literal sense. Socinians cavil, and infidels blaspheme, yet the Church shall proclaim this grand fact in her testimony, and heaven shall celebrate it in her songs. Every saint on earth says, “He loved me and gave himself for me;” and all the ransomed spirits in glory sing, “Unto him who loved us,” etc.

2. *Eating Christ’s flesh, and drinking his blood, imply the apprehension of this great truth.* It is clearly seen and understood that Christ gave his life as a ransom for sinners. Christ’s death is recognized

As the stipulated medium of mercy; Zech. 13 : 1.

As the substituted sacrifice for sin; 2 Cor. 5 : 21.

As the foundation of reconciliation; Col. 1 : 21, 22.

As the means of our acquittal and recovery; Job 32 : 24; Isa. 53 : 5.

3. *Reliance upon his sacrifice for the blessings of salvation.* Actual participation, as the figures *eating and drinking* imply. Bread is nothing to us, however prepared, presented or possessed, unless it be eaten. It is only by admitting it into the animal system that it can become nourishment. Read ver. 51, 53, 56. Does not this mean that a Saviour unapplied will profit nothing?

The believer feels his need of the Sacrifice and partakes of it. He eats, etc. He receives the blessings of his death by faith. His blood cleanses him from all sin. He is rescued by his sacrifice from condemnation, and springs into the liberty of the children of God.

4. *Eating Christ’s flesh and drinking his blood must be constant* to give permanence to spiritual life, joy, and hope.

Should we cease to eat and drink, our bodies would die; and if our faith were to be taken from the cross, spiritual life would soon become extinct. Sinai would flash and thunder against us again. Satan would triumph, and the gates of hell would open for us again. Eternal wrath

would be our prospect again. We shall need this food while we live. It will be necessary to the last; as long as we contract fresh guilt; as long as we are called to bear new trials; and discharge new duties; and even when we come to die, we must eat the flesh, etc.

Then frequently visit his cross—his throne—his word—his house—his table, where he is set forth. Go to his banqueting house, where his banner over you will be love. He invites you; "Eat, O friends, drink abundantly, O beloved."

II. A DISTINGUISHED PRIVILEGE. "Hath eternal life."

1. *In its principle.* The principle is spiritual life, which is the commencement—the incipient enjoyment of eternal life. So Christ said, John 4 : 14. "Christ died for us that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him." He died that our dead souls might be quickened by his spirit, that those principles might be formed within us so necessary to intercourse with heaven. In fellowship with the Saviour so delightful; in the faith which sees him that is invisible; in the love which elevates the heart to God; in the hope that enters within the veil; and in the rejoicing with joy unspeakable, etc., we see heaven—eternal life begun.

2. *In its earnest*,—the earnest of the Spirit, 1 Cor. 1 : 22. Believers have the *first-fruits* of the Spirit, Rom. 8 : 23, and are *sealed by the Spirit*. Eph. 1 : 13. Such phrases signify the assurance given by the Spirit of adoption, to believers of their inheritance in heaven. For as the first-fruits were pledges to the Jews of the ensuing crop; and as he that receives the earnest is sure to have the full bargain made good, so the privileges, joys, hopes, etc., of believers here, are the pledges of eternal life.

3. *In its title and connection.* Jesus paid the penalty of the sinner's transgression, he makes him meet for the inheritance which he has purchased by his blood; he has entered it as his forerunner; of that inheritance grace has appointed him to be a "joint-heir with Christ." See Rom. 8 : 17; Col. 1 : 12; 3 : 4.——The believer is said to be now connected with heaven, or eternal life. He is a citizen of heaven. "For our conversation," etc., Phil. 3 : 20; the word "conversation" means citizenship. He is a citizen of heaven, "a city which hath foundations," etc. See Heb. 12 : 22.

4. *In its glorious consummation.* He shall come to the end of his warfare—his race—his journey—his voyage, and enter his Father's palace, partake of all its enjoyments, and behold all its glories, and there reign in purity and ecstatic bliss forever and ever.

III. A GLORIOUS PROMISE. "I will raise him up at the last day."

1. *The time of its fulfilment.* "The last day." The great day of the whole world's assize. The day when we must see the great Infinite One—must be judged—when we shall have done with time—when our connection with eternity shall commence. The day of grandeur—of rapturous joy—of dreadful woe—of infinite honor—of infinite disgrace.

The first great act of the Redeemer at "the last day" will be

2. *To raise the dead*, and especially the bodies of his people who have eaten his flesh, etc. He will raise it up from the grave—change it from vileness to purity and glory—raise it from infirmity, imperfection, and liability to death. See 1 Cor. 15: 42, etc.

On the mount of transfiguration the face of Christ “shone like the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.” In this glory he appeared to Saul; he shone “above the brightness of the sun,” and struck him blind. When John saw him, “his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.” Rev. 1: 13, etc. Look at this glory of the Redeemer, and remember that to it the raised body of the believer is to be conformed, and united to the glorified soul.

3. *Introduction to the enjoyment of eternal life in heaven.* “Come, ye blessed.” See John 17: 24; Rev. 21. What a description of the everlasting abode of the righteous! See that city—a city of pure gold like unto clear glass—its gates of pearl—guarded and kept by twelve angels—its golden streets, like transparent glass—having no night there—needing no light of the sun or the moon, for, etc. (v. 23)—that city where “God shall wipe away all tears,” etc., ver. 4.

APPLICATION.

1. Salvation must be all of grace. Blessings so vast could never be purchased by sinful man.

2. There is a plenitude of salvation in Christ. Let the penitent believe.

3. If there be no participation here, there can be none in heaven.

XXXVIII.—THE PRECIOUS SONS OF ZION.

A METAPHORICAL SKETCH.

“The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how they are esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter.” — LAM. 4: 2.

THE pathetic Lamentations of Jeremiah refer to the captivity of the Jews, the consequence of their wickedness. — Every true patriot must lament when his country is degraded and distressed. — Jeremiah was a true patriot, and the beautifully pathetic language employed by him in this Book, strikingly indicates his character. — In ver. 1, he laments the awful change which the judgments of God had made in Jerusalem. The city that had been as gold, rich and splendid like fine gold, the perfection of beauty, and the perfection of the whole earth, had become dim, lost its lustre and value, and become dross. The temple was laid waste and given into the hands of the enemy; its curiously wrought stones were thrown down; its golden vessels, etc., were pillaged. — *The precious sons of Zion*, the Jewish priests and believers, previously comparable to fine gold, for their former holiness,

splendor of talent, and consecrated usefulness, were trampled upon and abused, v. 2, *esteemed as earthen pitchers*, vessels of dishonor in comparison of what they once were—broken as earthen pitchers, cast away and despised as vessels of no value.

I. THE CHARACTERS MENTIONED. "*Precious sons of Zion.*"

The south part of Jerusalem stood on Mount Zion, the king's palace on the north side of it, and the temple on Mount Moriah to the north-east of it, Ps. 48 : 2; but as Mount Moriah was at the end of it, it was called Mount Zion, and even the temple and its courts are so called, Ps. 65 : 1; 84 : 7; also the worshippers at the temple are called Zion. In allusion to it, the Jewish Church, the Christian Church, and the Church triumphant, are called Zion, Heb. 12 : 22; Rev. 14 : 1.

Although the term then was descriptive of the ancient worshippers of God in the temple, yet now it is applicable to all believers who worship God in spirit and truth, John 4 : 21-24.

Those who are the sons of Zion

1. *Have received Christ as their Saviour.* Jesus is the *Way* into the Church—into heaven. "I am the door." For all the important purposes of salvation, Christ has been received and trusted in by the sons of Zion.

2. The sons of Zion *have been regenerated.* This is necessary to holy communion, Ps. 87 : 5, 6; they are born again—passed from death unto life, and they love the brethren.

3. *They enjoy all the privileges of adopting love.* They are "the children of God by faith." They have fellowship with Zion's King—with Zion's children. They are fellow-citizens with the saints. They are protected, defended, and preserved. They are interested in all the ordinances, promises, immortal prospects, and all things are theirs.

4. The sons of Zion love it, and seek its prosperity. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem," etc. Hence they consecrate their talents, their time, their prayers, and ministrations, to make it glorious in the earth.

II. THEIR COMPARATIVE EXCELLENCE. They are *precious*, and *comparable to fine gold*.

1. Precious in the estimation of *the highest intelligences.* In the estimation of God—of Christ, by whom they were redeemed by the shedding of his "precious blood," 1 Pet. 1 : 18. Precious in the estimation of angels—and of all good men, one of whom says, "Ye are a chosen generation," etc., 1 Pet. 2 : 9.

2. They are *comparable to fine gold*,

(1.) On account of *the refining process* to which they have been subjected. Gold in the ore is not pure, but mixed with other materials. It has therefore to be separated and purified by fire to render it fine.——Saints have been separated from sin and an evil world. The Spirit has renewed them—the visitations of God have subdued them—the inflictions of his hand in the furnace of affliction have

refined them, Job 23 : 10; Zech. 13 : 9; 1 Pet. 1 : 7. Therefore they are now like fine gold.

(2.) *For their purity.* Gold in its refined state, is so freed from alloy or dross, that among the metals it is esteemed the purest. But gold in its best state is not altogether free from impurity. And saints are not perfect.——But they are comparatively pure. They are “complete” in Christ. Compare their present with their former state.——Compare their character with that of the wicked. They are going on to perfection—they will enter heaven, and there have neither “spot or wrinkle,” etc.

(3.) *For their great value.* Gold is one of the “precious metals,” and forms the most valuable part of the world’s currency. Fine gold, that which has been greatly refined, burnished, carved, etc., represents the value of the precious sons of Zion. In their own estimation, they are “poor, and wretched,” etc., but their divine transformation, their union with Christ, their holy and active life, have given them a value incalculable.

What is a Christian? An adopted child in the holy family of God; stamped with the image of the Eternal; having the seal of Divinity affixed to his nature, being the temple of the Holy Ghost. He is destined to reign as a king, and to officiate as a high-priest in the temple of heaven forever and ever.

What is a Christian? An embodiment of the love, and mercy, and wisdom of Jehovah—the depository of the riches of precious grace, to whose benefit everything in heaven and earth is subordinate. He is a jewel preparing for insertion in the Saviour’s crown, a stone making ready for being built into the temple of eternity, a joint-heir with the only-begotten Son of God, destined for an inheritance, compared with the rich value of which all the treasures of earth are vanity. Who so valuable as he who in time possesses the rich blessings of grace, and through eternity shall wear the diadem of glory? Well may he despise the honors, the gilded baubles, which vain men covet, and which kings bestow. “His pleasures rise from things unseen.” He possesses a more dignified rank than earthly potentates can confer—he holds the patent of a more splendid nobility than any which kings can create—he is a younger brother in the family of God, and shall share with angels in the glorious dignities to be dispensed by the King of kings.

Then what is a Christian? And what is his value?

“A Christian is the highest style of man.”

O for an interest in that name
When hell shall ope its jaws of flame,
And sinners to their doom be hurled,
While scorned “saints shall judge the world!”

How shall the name of saint be prized,
Though now neglected and despised,
When truth shall witness to the Lord,
That none but “saints shall judge the world!”

4. *For their usefulness.* By gold as the means of purchase, the value of an object is to be estimated. And as the circulation of gold promotes the comfort and good of mankind, so the sons of Zion by

the holiness of their lives, by their fervent prayers, by their holy charities, laboring to do good and to communicate, are a rich blessing to the world. Think of their influence in a family, in a neighborhood, in a town, in the Church, in the world. They are the *lights* of the world. [Amplify.]

5. *For their scarcity.* Gold is not found in every country; it is not imbedded in every soil; it does not circulate in every country; it is possessed by few.

And "the sons of Zion are not to be found in every land; they are not abundant in Christian lands. Christ's flock is a little flock." Though the Saviour is to have "the heathen," etc., yet at present, his friends are greatly outnumbered by his foes. Look at heathen lands—subtract the formal from the Israelites indeed, etc. [Amplify.]

III. THE ESTIMATE FORMED OF THE SONS OF ZION: "How are they esteemed as earthen pitchers," etc.

The language refers to the desolation of the temple, its priests, and its worshippers. The priests having lost their spirituality, and sunk into shocking criminality, no longer ministered in the holy place and carried its golden vessels. The mitre, the ephod, the breastplate, were taken from them. The holy fire on the altar was put out, sacrifices were offered no longer. And the priests, the *precious sons of Zion*, the worshippers of the temple, degraded by sinful idolatry, were now regarded with contempt, deemed as *earthen pitchers*, broken and cast away. Well might the prophet say, "How," ver. 1; and again, "How are they esteemed," etc., ver. 2, as the vilest work of the potter's hands!

Observe therefore, sometimes,

1. This contemptuous estimate is *the fruit of sin*. By sin men have fallen from the loftiest stations, and quitted the most dignified offices. The loftiest stars have been obscured. Some have developed their real character; having been only dissemblers, as proved by the expenditure of their excitement, and their subsequent wickedness. Some have fallen through temptation, and have been awfully degraded, etc. Comparable to fine gold before they fell, the finger of scorn points them out, and says, "How are," etc.

2. *This contemptuous estimate is the misrepresentation of carnal men.* They see through a false medium. Satan has blinded their minds and perverted their tastes. They have no relish for God, and therefore it is no wonder that they should treat with contempt those whom God infinitely loves, and over whom angels rejoice as "the excellent of the earth."

(1.) This has ever been the case. Mark the Apostles. 1 Cor. 4: 13; 2 Cor. 4: 4, 7-11.

(2.) The opinion does not affect the estimate formed by heaven. It is the tendency of grace to enrich, beautify, etc., and God knows and loves his own work.

(3.) The estimate formed by sinners is their disgrace, and will be their ruin. Despising God's people is an awful feature in man's character.

XXXIX.—THE GIFT OF CHRIST.

"Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father."—GAL. 1 : 4.

REDEEMING love is an interesting theme to saints on earth, and to saints in glory. — It should be the favorite topic of the Christian's constant meditation. Nothing could so interest him, nothing could so cheer him. Christ is his best friend; wonderful beyond all parallel has been his love, and splendid are all his gifts to him. Rich beyond conception are all his purposes of grace which he is executing, and magnificent is the reward which Christ is preparing for the believer. Therefore, ought not Christ to be remembered? Ought he not to be loved? — In this passage, Paul declares what he has done for the Church. Consider

I. THE GIFT. "He gave himself."

In ver. 3, he is styled, "Our Lord Jesus Christ," names implying Divinity, and consecration to the office of saving the world. The Divinely anointed Almighty Saviour. — Regard him

1. *As the object of every prophecy*, from the time of the first promise to the end of the old dispensation. Patriarchs and prophets spake to him.

2. *The substance of every type and shadow*. All the sacrifices pointed to him. The splendid service of the temple pointed to him. The mercy-seat, the ark of the covenant, etc. — The rock smitten in Horeb, the serpent of brass, the cities of refuge, the scape-goat, the bleeding lamb, the altar's fire, etc., pointed to him. Like stars in the hemisphere they declared the rising of the Sun of Righteousness. [Amplify.]

3. *The subject of every promise*. Luke 1 : 72; Rom. 1 : 2, 3; Acts 3 : 18.

4. *He was qualified for the work of human redemption*. Divine — Human — Spotless. Possessed of infinite love. — Willing to suffer and die.

II. HIS MARVELLOUS ACT. "Gave himself for our sins."

1. "*He gave himself*,"

To *all the privations and sorrows* of human life. "Form of a servant." "Came into the world" which disowned him — abhorred him.

To *obscurity and indigence* — born in a stable — had not where to lay his head.

To *scorn and infamy*. Denounced as a glutton, etc., as insane, as a demoniac, as a traitor, Ps. 69 : 20.

To *pain and anguish*. "Man of sorrows." Judas betrayed him. Peter denied him. The disciples fled. His agony — apprehension — unjustly tried, condemned, etc.

To an ignominious and painful death. Isa. 53 : 4-6. He died the just for the unjust.

2. The purpose for which he gave himself: "For our sins."

Man is a sinner. He has transgressed the Divine law, and rendered himself accursed. Christ died to save helpless, ruined man. He gave himself

(1.) To deliver us from sin's curse. Gal. 3 : 13.

(2.) From sin's defilement, Eph. 5 : 25-27 ; Titus 2 : 11-14 ; 1 John 1 : 9.

(3.) From sin's dominion, Rom. 6 : 14. Renovated in heart and life, sin is now hateful ; and the power communicated by Christ enables the Christian to resist it.

(4.) From the effects of sin in this world and in eternity. From guilty fears — fear of death — the fear of endless perdition. The believer now has peace, joy, hope, triumph.

III. THE DESIGN OF CHRIST'S OFFERING: "That he might deliver us from this present evil world."

The word translated "evil" means in the original *laborious* and *oppressive*; and therefore the phrase, "*present evil world*," has been referred by some to freedom from the Jewish ceremonial yoke, which was a burden neither they nor their fathers were able to bear. The Apostle informs the Galatians that circumcision and all the other ritual parts of the Mosaic economy should cease. The law had declared the evil and guilt of sin, in its various ordinances, washings, and sacrifices ; but the common sense, even of its own votaries, declared "it was impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin." A higher atonement was necessary, and when God provided *that*, all its shadows and representations necessarily ceased.

But the sacrifice of Christ, and the union and intercourse with him, to deliver us from the present evil world.

Not totally to remove us out of the world, but to deliver us from its *evil practices*—from its *spirit*, so that we shall not be identified with it, John 17 : 15.

To deliver us from the condemnation to which the world will be subjected.

To deliver us from attachment to it ; for it is not our rest. To influence us to look higher, accounting ourselves as "strangers and pilgrims" on earth ; declaring plainly that we are "seeking a better country, that is a heavenly one."

To deliver us when we die, from its sins, sorrows, trials, sinful beings, and to introduce us to a purer, brighter, happier world than this, where we shall reside forever.

IV. THAT CHRIST'S OFFERING WAS ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF GOD. "According to the will of God," etc.

1. It was the will of God that we should be saved.

2. Christ was the appointed agent. He, as Mediator, was the

Father's servant, and whatever he did in the work of mediation for us, was by the appointment and special approbation of the Father. The Son's sacrifice was the Father's pleasure.

3. The sacrifice of Christ was *voluntary*. "He gave himself," John 10: 17, 18. It must therefore have been prompted by infinite love.

In conclusion, behold the amazing condescension of Jehovah. He has through the atonement of Jesus, become the Father of all believers. "According to the will of God our Father."

Believers should breathe the spirit of Paul, v. 5.

What encouragement the Sacrifice of Christ gives to all the contrite!

XL.—THE CONQUEROR'S REWARD.

"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name."—Rev. 3: 12.

THOUGH many parts of the book of Revelation are exceedingly mysterious, yet those portions referring to the mediation of Jesus Christ, and the happiness of the saints when they shall reign with him in heaven, are plainly, yet beautifully stated, and can be easily understood.

The text is part of the epistle addressed to the Church in Philadelphia. The language of the Saviour is commendatory of their fidelity to his truth and cause; he enjoins upon them inviolable attachment to the end, "that no man take their crown," and promises them everlasting aggrandizement in the heavenly temple, if faithful to death. "Him," etc.——How animating this announcement! It is the voice of the Almighty Conqueror to all the soldiers of his cross. It calls upon them not to faint in the day of adversity, not to be daunted by their foes, not to be discouraged on account of the way. It calls upon them to gird up the loins of their minds, to be sober and hope to the end.

I. THE CHARACTER TO WHOM THE PROMISE IS MADE. "Him that overcometh."

This promise is not made indiscriminately. All the promises of God are associated with Christian character. This is made to Christian warriors. He that fights and overcomes shall win. He that is indifferent to the conflict shall lose the victor's crown and joy.

Observe,

1. Every Christian soldier has been called from the service of sin and Satan to the service of Christ and his cause. He has been enlisted under the banner of the cross.

2. The term, "Him that overcometh" implies *contest with enemies*. The contest of the Christian soldier consists

In the *subjugation of evil propensities*. Pride, envy, resentment,

carnality, indolence, hardness of heart, despondency, love of the world, lust, etc.

In opposing the artful cunning and malevolent designs of the Prince of darkness.

In the maintenance of faith, hope, patience, and resignation in seasons of adversity.

In maintaining a courageous profession in the face of persecution, obloquy, and contempt.

In opposing error, spreading and defending the truth.

In rising superior to the fear of death and everlasting perdition.

3. In this conflict the Christian *draws all his supplies of strength from Christ.*

4. In this warfare he is animated by the conflict and victory of his Lord, Heb. 12 : 2, 3, and by the reward which he has promised to every faithful soldier.

5. The Christian soldier will overcome. Victory is promised, and victory is sure. Jehovah is on his side.

II. THE IMPORT OF THE PROMISE. "I will make a pillar," etc.

This figure represents the happiness of a glorified saint. Observe

1. *The scene of his happiness.* "In the temple of my God." The Book of Revelation constantly refers to the temple-service of the Jews, which furnishes some of its most striking symbols. Thus we have a temple, an altar, incense, priests clothed in white, cherubim, and the sacred presence of God. The temple prefigures heaven, the glorious and fixed residence of the Most High, where he is served by multitudes of angels and men, and honored with endless anthems of praise. Ps. 11 : 4; Rev. 7 : 15.—"And I saw no temple therein." The preparative means of grace are wanted no more. "That which is perfect will be come."—Soar to the city, and you will find "no temple *therein*." The whole is a temple, set apart for the noblest exercises of the intellect and the heart, the exercises of religion. "The Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb are the temple of it."

Heaven as the temple of the Deity implies

(1.) *Magnificence and Purity.* Such was the ancient temple. —The place where God dwells must be pure. It is "the habitation of his holiness."

(2.) *The Divine presence,* as enjoyed by all his people. As God dwelt in the ancient temple, so he dwells in the midst of his Church in heaven. Glorious was the Shekinah, which was the visible manifestation of God's presence, but infinitely more glorious the displays of the Divine Majesty which enrapture the Church triumphant in heaven. "We shall see him as he is." "Absent from the body, and present with the Lord."

(3.) *Worship.* The earthly temple was for the worship of God.

And this in a perfect and exalted degree shall be the case in the heavenly temple. The worship there shall be all praise. No prayer shall be there, for there shall be no sense of want; all is praise, for all is manifestation and light; all is praise, for all is triumph; all is praise, for all is rapturous enjoyment. Whatever the feeling, praise, eternal praise, is the expression of it, from the breathing whisper of adoring love, which flits through the prostrate ranks of the redeemed, to the full chorus of praise, the high, the universal shout of glory, and honor, and blessing to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb forever.

2. The figurative promise intimates that the Christian conqueror shall be a *monumental pillar in the celestial temple*. "Will I make a pillar in," etc. The reference may be to *monuments* raised in memory of some person or action, Gen. 35 : 20; 2 Sam. 18 : 18. Or an allusion to the two pillars in the temple of Jerusalem called *Jachin*, "He is established," and *Boaz*, "strength." The Church is the temple; Christ is the foundation on which it is built, and his ministers are the pillars by which, under Him, it is adorned and supported.

Observe, In the celestial temple, the saints will be

(1.) *Monuments of Christ's saving power*. They appear there, having been rescued by his Omnipotent arm from Satan's bondage—washed in his precious blood, and justified from all condemnation. [Amplify.]

(2.) They will be *monuments of his purifying and beautifying influence*. Having carried on his work in their souls, and presented them to God as a "glorified Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing," but "holy and without blemish." In his image they shine; in his righteousness they appear, and his glory they display. The vile body is changed and made like Christ's glorious body, and united to the sanctified soul. "As we have borne the image of the earthly, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly."

The grace of God displayed in their conversion, progress in holiness, and accession to heaven, will redound to the honor of God forever and ever. Look then at those shining and beauteous pillars in the temple above! See how they reflect his glory!—As a building shows the skill of the architect, etc. etc., so do those polished, adorned, beautified, and immortal pillars, reflect the Divine skill and power. "He is glorified in them that believe." See Rev. 4 : 9, etc.

3. These pillars shall be *inscribed with delightful intimations*.

(1.) *With the name of God*. "I will write upon him the name of my God," that all may know that he is an adopted and glorified child of God, a king and a priest unto him forever. The *name of God*, to denote that he is his property, and his eternal design, as the Great Architect.—The Jewish high-priest had written on his forehead, "Holiness to the Lord;" *Kodesh Laihovah*.

(2.) *The name of the city of God*, "New Jerusalem," etc. This language declares the spiritual conqueror to be a citizen of the

new Jerusalem, which is said to come down from heaven ; that is, the knowledge of it comes down to us from heaven, else we had never known it, nor could we ever have conceived of it. Every believer, therefore, is of heavenly origin. That power which leads him to the Church militant and to the Church triumphant, *cometh down from heaven*. He is the blood royal of heaven. He can boast of a more ancient, honorable, and glorious heraldry than any of the princes of the earth. "He is born again, not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God." He therefore has a title to heavenly citizenship.

(3.) *A new name.* "My new name." Even that of Emmanuel, Jesus, the Redeemer of Sinners, which he has assumed in addition to his former titles of Creator, Upholder, Lord of all worlds. Thus he would *own* him, and *proclaim* him, as one of his chosen people, a trophy of his victory over the world, sin, Satan, and death. A monument erected to the power of his arm and the truth of his word.

"My new name:" Am I the Saviour? He that believes on me, and conquers, is a saved one. Am I the Redeemer? He is a redeemed one. Am I the Ransomer? He is a ransomed captive. He is the blessed of my Father, the chosen of my heart, the purchase of my blood, the champion of my cause, the object of my care, and the sharer of my joy.

4. These pillars shall be *eternally fixed in the temple of God*. "And he shall go no more out." The pillars in Solomon's porch were removed and carried away by the Chaldeans, but these pillars shall be perpetual. "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever!" — How soon do the high-sounding titles of men pass away! Engrave them ever so deep on the lofty pillar, how soon are they defaced! Scarce has fame fixed one favorite on her slippery place, and sounded his name from her trumpet, ere she thrusts him down to make way for another. But they that stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion shall never be moved.

XLI.—ENJOYMENT OF DIVINE GOODNESS.

"O taste and see that the Lord is good : blessed is the man that trusteth in him." — Ps. 34 : 8.

THE attributes of the Deity are worthy of the highest contemplation. To the true Christian they are full of interest and delight. "My meditation of him shall be sweet." — But to guilty man they have no interest, but frequently fill him with terror. — Eternity and immensity amaze our thoughts; infinite knowledge and wisdom, omnipotence, universal dominion, clothed with impartial justice, however worthy of the highest praise, appear overwhelming rather than delightful. Infinite purity, with all its loveliness, is of too bright a glory for

sinners to contemplate with joy. But that which represents God under the idea of an amiable as well as a glorious Being, as a Father as well as a Sovereign, is the attribute of Divine goodness. — In this Psalm, David instances the Divine goodness, and, in the text, invites others to partake of its richness.

I. A CHEERING TRUTH. “*The Lord is good.*”

Goodness is an essential property of the Divine nature, and is manifest in the provision God has made for conferring happiness on the creatures he has caused to exist. He himself claims this attribute, Ex. 34 : 5, 6. “They shall utter abundantly the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness.” Goodness belongs only to God; he is solely good, Matt. 19 : 17 : and all the goodness found in creatures is only an emanation of the Divine goodness. He is the chief good — the sum and substance of all felicity.

This attribute has different designations, according to the different objects on which it terminates. When it confers happiness without merit, it is called grace; when it commiserates the wretched and makes them happy, it is called mercy; when it defends the innocent, it is called righteousness; when it delays to punish sinners, it is called patience and long-suffering; when it pardons the guilty, it is called forgiveness; and when it bestows blessings according to promise, it is called truth.

Consider

1. *Its Manifestation.*

(1.) In the work of *creation*; wherein are discovered *variety* — *beauty* — *order* — *abundance*.

(2.) In *man*. In him we have our being. He made us, and not we ourselves. To occupy a very humble place in the scale of being is honorable; but to have a place among God’s rational subjects, who are animated with immortal natures, and enriched with faculties susceptible of the most extraordinary enlargement, is an unspeakable honor.

(3.) In the *arrangements of his Providence*. He amply provides for the wants of his large family. “Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.” Ps. 145 : 16.

He is called “the Preserver of men,” Job 7 : 20. He gives the means of preservation — food, raiment, materials for habitations. Health, without which, all the objects of time lose their charms — health, for which men extensively travel, and expend untold treasures. “The Preserver of men!” Without the blessing of God, the means of preservation would be useless; for human life is like a bubble floating upon the stream, ready to burst; or, as a spark hovering above the waves of the sea, ready every moment to be extinguished.

He protects from danger—from enemies; restrains men’s unruly passions; produces good out of evil; and daily loads us with benefits.

(4.) In the work of *Redemption*. He commiserated the state of the guilty. He commissioned his only begotten Son to come into this world as the Saviour of sinners. From riches Christ stooped

to poverty; from happiness, to the curse; from glory to shame; from the throne, to the cross. The dearest and sweetest of all his enjoyments was his Father's smile; yet, to the power of his anger, he gave up his life—his soul. He gave not the armies of heaven, nor the riches of the universe, but himself for us.

How *numerous* are the blessings which Goodness from the cross bestows! Pardon to the chief of sinners; adoption to the children of wrath; liberty to the captives: wisdom to babes: healing to wounded hearts, and holy beauties to the deformed and the leprous. What are the gifts he bestows but the liberality of his goodness? What are the consolations he imparts but the sympathy of goodness? What is the protection he affords but the shield of his goodness? What is the watchfulness which he exercises but the care of goodness? What are the checks by which he stops us in the career of folly but the restraints of goodness? What is the glory he is preparing but the crown of goodness?

2. The Character of the Divine Goodness.

(1.) It is *perfectly free and gratuitous*. No one has deserved it. "He freely gives us all things."

(2.) *Rich and abundant*. Look abroad through creation—observe his bounty in temporal things—think of spiritual blessings, privileges, promises, and the glory reserved in heaven. How rich and abundant! "How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God!"

(3.) *Special*. He loves all his creatures, but especially them that believe. They are the called, the chosen, the faithful. They are the objects of his special care. He gives them his Spirit. He comforts them in holy communion. He grants them the joys of his salvation. He watches over them in every scene, and appoints angels to guard and preserve them. Sublime is their future destiny in eternity; and, as he loves them, he will save and prepare them for it.

(4.) *Immutable and everlasting*. How unchangeable the seasons! Seed-time, spring, summer, and winter. The time of harvest, the early and the latter rain, etc.

And all spiritual blessings are unchangeable! "Thy mercy, O God, is from everlasting to everlasting." Our goodness is often as the morning cloud and as the early dew: but the goodness of our Lord endureth forever, unexhausted in its stores, and unwearied in working. This earth, which is so full of his mercy, shall pass away. Time, whose rolling tide spreads its bounties from day to day, shall sink into eternity; but the Saviour's goodness shall fill a nobler sphere with blessings suited to a state of perfection, by a stream ever flowing and ever full.

II. A HEARTY INVITATION. "*O taste and see.*"

1. *It is the language of experience*. "O taste and see."

I have tasted the goodness of God from my youth up. He raised me from obscurity to become a king. He preserved my life from the bear, the lion, the giant, the furious Saul, the traitorous Absalom, and from perfidious courtiers, and made his goodness to pass before me. He has forgiven my flagrant crimes, and restored to me the joys of his

salvation. He has made with me an everlasting covenant, etc. [Amplify.]

(2.) It is an invitation *prompted by love*. I have tasted, and I want others to taste, that I may rejoice at their happiness, which will conduce to the glory of God.

Ye young, taste the Divine goodness — ye men of secular care and toil, see the spring of your prosperity, etc. — ye aged, drop not into the grave without tasting that the Lord is good. In the best of blessings, infinite good, the Christian is no monopolist. Were you to find on earth a precious jewel, a diamond, a pearl, or a lump of gold, how anxious would you be to conceal it for the purpose of monopoly! But where a man really finds and tastes of Christ, that Pearl of great Price, etc., he immediately calls to others, "O taste and see," etc.

3. It is an invitation to participate.

Many persons are the subjects of the Divine goodness, but they do not enjoy it, they do not properly taste it. They are daily loaded with Divine favors—their table is fully spread—their business prospers, etc., but they acknowledge not the hand of God. — But sweet is the participation of the Christian. It is my Father's bounty that feeds me; my Father's hand that upholds and guides me; it is my Father's Spirit and grace that comfort me and inspire me with hope. All that I am, have, hope to be, comes from him. I taste it, I enjoy it. — How much the hardened sinner resembles the brute of the field, constantly partaking of the Divine bounty, but never acknowledging obligation to the God of love.

(1.) To taste it, or properly to participate, requires *Divine enlightenment and renovation of heart*. This will reveal to us the character of God; his love to us in creation, providence, and grace, causes us to feel our need of the Divine goodness, gives us a desire and a relish for it.

(2.) A deep sense of our *unworthiness*, and of our entire dependence upon God.

(3.) As it regards spiritual blessings, there can be no participation without *faith*. See the representation of Christ. John 6 : 51, 54–57. To *taste and see*, is the experience of faith. 1 Pet. 2 : 1–3.

(4.) There are appointed times and places for tasting the Divine goodness. Go to his house, ordinances, word, throne, prayer, converse of friends, etc.

III. AN INVALUABLE BLESSING. "Blessed is the man," etc.

The person who is *blessed* is one who "trusteth in him;" that is, a child of God, who constantly depends on him for life and salvation.

Experience of past goodness induces trust for the future.

The consequence is good; all that good he desired, he enjoys.

Such a man has peace — inward satisfaction — calmness in the midst of trouble — resignation, hope, etc.

Thus is he blessed *now*, already blessed.

He shall be blessed at death.
He shall be blessed for evermore.

APPLICATION.

1. Admire the goodness of God.
2. Praise him, and beware of ingratitude.
3. Call others to partake of it.

XLII. — THE GOSPEL NEGLECTED.

"Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"—
ISA. 53 : 1.

THIS chapter narrates the circumstances of Christ's sufferings so exactly, that it forms rather a history of his passion than a prophecy. And it is so undeniable a proof of the truth of Christianity, that the mere reading of it, comparing it with the records of the evangelists, has converted some infidels. — The prophet, at the close of the preceding chapter, foretells the favorable reception which the Gospel should have among the Gentiles; that nations and their kings should bid it welcome, etc. In the text, he foretells with wonder the unbelief of the Jews, and their rejection of the Divine Messiah.

I. THE NATURE OF THE GOSPEL REPORT.

"The word report" may be rendered *doctrine*. The doctrine of the Gospel reported by the prophet, in the close of the preceding chapter, and which he so beautifully develops in this. Here we have the substance of the Gospel; its great fundamental truths, which angels have thought it their highest honor to report to the universe.

1. It is a report of *Man's lost and ruined condition*.

That he is fallen, become vile, disobedient, condemned, accursed. See ver. 6. The language of the prophet, from ver. 3–9, implies awful guilt on the part of the sinner. See the evil and bitter nature of sin in the "sorrows," "grief," "despite," "smitings," "wounds," "bruises," "chastisement," "stripes," which afflicted and oppressed the Redeemer. Sin is so heinous to Infinite Purity, that he is necessitated to hurl upon it his vengeance either on the perpetrator, or an adequate substitute.

2. It is a Report of the *helplessness of man*.

Of the futility of all human attempts to emancipate man from the direful effects of transgression. It says, Thou canst not break thy fetters; thou canst not unbar the gates of thy prison-house, nor raise thyself from the pit of darkness. Thou art sick, but thou canst not heal thyself. Thou art vile; "Can the Ethiopian," etc. Thou art cursed; canst thou turn the curse into a blessing? Thou art at variance with thy Maker; "Can two walk together except they be agreed?"

3. It is a Report of the *Devisings of Infinite love for Man's salvation.*

The Prescience of God saw that man would fall. Before this orb was created, man as a lapsed, rebellious, and vile sinner, stood before the eye of Jehovah. Then he made him the object of his infinite commiseration, by devising the plan of redemption, to be carried out by his only begotten Son, the "lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

4. It is a Report of the *actual accomplishment of the purposes of Divine mercy for Man's salvation.* These purposes had been revealed to Adam; to the patriarchs, prophets, etc. But "when the fulness of time was come," etc. Gal. 4 : 4.

It is a Report of his incarnation; of his conformity to the law; of the manifestations of his Divinity; of his ignominious sufferings and death; of his glorious resurrection and triumphant ascension, etc.

It is a Report that his sufferings and death were sacrificial, and accepted by Jehovah as magnifying the law, satisfying Divine justice, and reconciling man to God.

It is a Report of the rich blessings of his Sacrifice. Pardon for the vilest. Peace for the distressed, etc. etc.

5. It is the *most interesting Report ever delivered.*

It is "glad tidings of good things" to all people. Tidings of the best, the richest, the most necessary of blessings! The report of discovered treasures; of important inventions; of successful schemes; of decisive battles, splendid victories, and established peace, may be interesting, but mean when compared with the "glad tidings of salvation." Saints delight in it. Angels view it with rapture. Demons regard it with envy.

6. It is a *true Report.* "A faithful saying." "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

It is not merely ideal; it is not romantic fiction; not "a cunningly devised fable," but "a sure word of prophecy."

Every article of the Gospel history was a fulfilment of some ancient prediction, which gave a wonderful confirmation of its truth; and the numerous miracles which Christ performed, crowned with his promised resurrection from the dead, left no room to doubt the truth of his Gospel. The apostles confirmed this report by "infallible signs," for they healed the sick, and raised the dead. And the continual efficacy of the Gospel in all succeeding ages in converting sinners, and in sanctifying and comforting believers, is a conclusive evidence that this report is true.

II. THAT THE PUBLICATION OF THIS REPORT IS ACCOMPANIED WITH DIVINE ENERGY. "The arm of the Lord is revealed."

The arm and the hand are emblems of power. Hence the expressions refer to the creative and saving power of God. Jer. 32 : 17; Ex. 6 : 6; Isa. 33 : 2. Christ's arm is his saving power, mercy, and love. The ancient warriors made bare their right arm when closely engaged in battle; in allusion to which, God is said to make bare his

arm, when in a very remarkable manner he exerts his mercy and power for the deliverance of his people, and the destruction of his enemies, or when he reveals his Son to men, as the power and wisdom of God. Isa. 52 : 10.

The power of God accompanies the preaching of the Gospel. "The arm of the Lord is revealed." This is done by the influence of the Spirit which he promised to his disciples. John 16 : 7, etc. In this way "the arm of the Lord" was revealed on the day of Pentecost. The word came "in demonstration of the Spirit." "Paul may plant," etc. "The weapons of our warfare," etc. "God who commanded," etc. 2 Cor. 4 : 6. The success which attended the ministry of the Apostles is ascribed to the "hand of the Lord being with them," giving efficacy to the word of his grace. The Spirit is a *discerner*, a *convincer*, a *quickener*, a *comforter*.

The revelation of the arm of the Lord is absolutely *necessary*, if we consider, 1. The ignorance of the sinner. 2. The apathy and obstinacy of his mind. 3. His supreme attachment to sin and worldly objects. 4. His subjection to Satanic influence; a miserable captive. 5. His helplessness.

III. THAT THE GOSPEL IS ANNOUNCED TO BE BELIEVED AND ENJOYED. "Who hath believed?"

Hence the commission of Christ, "He that believeth," etc. Mark 16 : 15, 16. The Gospel was preached to the nations for "the obedience of faith." Believing implies, —

1. An acquaintance with the nature of this Report. The Gospel must be understood, or we cannot believe it.

2. A deep conviction that we need an interest in the great doctrines which it proclaims. That as sinners we need an interest in atoning love — that as guilty we need pardon — that as outcasts we need adoption, etc. etc. That our spiritual necessities are vast — that an interest in Christ is indispensable.

3. An application to God through Christ for an interest in the rich and everlasting blessings of the Gospel. All self-dependence — all self-righteousness is abandoned. The language now is, None but Christ. Hence there is a reliance upon Christ as the atoning sacrifice, etc.

And should not this Report be believed? "It is worthy of all acceptation." It is true—it is a rich display of infinite love—it is the sovereign remedy for all our woes—it is the revealer of immortal bliss, of a kingdom, and a crown; and it invests us with a title and a meetness for their enjoyment.

IV. THAT NOTWITHSTANDING ITS GLORIOUS IMPORT, AND THE DIVINE ENERGY CONNECTED WITH IT, IT IS FREQUENTLY DESPISED AND REJECTED.

1. *This was the case with the Jews.* See John 12 : 38; Rom 10 : 16. The reason is assigned by the Prophet, ver. 2, 3. They were prejudiced against his person. His preaching and teaching were powerful to them, but they would not espouse his cause, because he had "no

comeliness," etc.,—no splendid retinue—no pompous parade, etc. etc. Then the Gospel was opposed to their formality, self-righteousness, and hypocrisy. "The word did not profit them, not being mixed with faith."

2. *It is the case now.* Considering the nature of this Report, and man's condition as a sinner, it might be expected that it would be favorably received. But he is still "despised and rejected of men." Some do not so much as give the Gospel a hearing, but make light of it.—Some violently oppose it, and prevent those who would embrace it.—Some pervert it, and so destroy its efficacy.—None receive it but such as are born again, and they only believe to the saving of the soul.—Therefore this contempt

(1.) Arises from ignorance of its nature and value. (2.) From apathy and indifference to spiritual happiness as induced by pride, the love of the world—covetousness—sensual indulgence. (3.) The want of prayer for Divine energy—to enlighten, convince, quicken, and incline to the reception of this Report.

3. The rejection of the Gospel *will involve fearful consequences.* Look at the Jews—they were cut off through unbelief. It is the rejection of Heaven's only plan for the salvation of guilty men. It is a despise of God's Spirit, or his revealed arm.

APPLICATION.

Have you believed the Gospel Report? Do you enjoy it, finding it accompanied with the revelation of God's arm?

The contempt of this Report should lead us to humility, to prayer and zeal.

Let sinners remember that there is no other scheme adequate to the demands of human necessity, or which can inspire human hope.

XLIII. — THE DEFENCE OF THE GOSPEL.

"I am set for the defence of the Gospel."—PHIL. 1 : 17.

PAUL's attachment to Christianity was great. He loved it as the source of all his spiritual bliss; he loved it as the grand remedy for man's woes; he loved it so as to preach it boldly, to defend it manfully, and to be willing to die for it. — When he wrote this epistle, the Gospel was opposed by Judaizing teachers, who insisted on the necessity of connecting the Mosaic rites with the Christian institutions, and probably they represented Paul, then at Rome, as an enemy to the law and the prophets, and as a very imperfect Christian, because he denounced the doctrine of circumcision. — Some espoused his doctrine and cause, v. 15, others preached Christ *of contention, not sincerely*, v. 16. As if he had said, "These Judaizing teachers acknowledge Christ as the promised Messiah, and preach him as such, but not *sincerely*, not chastely, garbling the Gospel; not speaking the whole truth, but just

what serves their purpose, and they denounce me as an enemy. But others in their preaching are actuated by love, and co-operate with me, knowing that I have been divinely appointed as a defender of the Gospel."

I. THE CAUSE TO BE DEFENDED; "the Gospel."

The Gospel is a revelation of the grace of God to fallen man through Christ the Mediator. It is called *the Gospel of God*, Acts 20 : 24, because it proceeds from him and manifests his favor. It is called *the Gospel of Christ*, Rom. 1 : 16. He is the immediate Author and the subject of it. It is called *the Gospel of salvation*, Eph. 1 : 13. It brings the good news that salvation may be obtained, it offers this salvation, it proposes the terms of accepting it, and affords grace to bring men to salvation.

The word Gospel in the original, signifies *good news* or *glad tidings*.

1. It is glad tidings to a *lost and ruined world*. "All have sinned," etc. All are condemned, helpless, ignorant.

2. It is glad tidings of the *advent of Christ to become the Saviour of sinners*. 1 Tim. 1 : 15. Assumed their nature—fulfilled the law—endured its penalty. John 3 : 14-19; Rom. 4 : 24, 25; 1 Cor. 15 : 1-5.

3. It is the glad tidings of *pardon and justification*, and all their blissful effects, 1 John 1 : 7; Acts 13 : 38, 39; Rom. 5 : 1; 8 : 1. Thus the poor captive is delivered—the prisoner leaves his dungeon—the debtor is discharged—the criminal escapes execution because the blessed Jesus becomes his substitute.

4. It is the glad tidings of *adopting love*. The poor outcast is taken into the Divine family—the forlorn and wretched are made sons, etc. John 1 : 12.

5. It is the glad tidings of *triumph over all spiritual foes*. Thus Christ on behalf of his people "spoiled principalities and powers," Col. 2 : 14, 15.——His conquest is the sure pledge and earnest that his people shall be "more than conquerors" over every adversary.

6. It is the glad tidings of *immortal glory*. "Jesus Christ brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel." 2 Tim. 1 : 10.

II. THAT THIS GOSPEL IS SOMETIMES OPPOSED.

1. It is ever opposed by the *carnal mind*. 1 Cor. 2 : 14.

2. It is opposed by the *self-righteous*. Such were the Jews and the Pharisees of old, Rom. 10 : 3, 4. And there are many such opponents now.

3. By *Unitarians and Socinians*, who reject the divinity of Christ.——If Christ is not a Divine Saviour, his death has no more merit than that of any martyr.

4. By *infidel philosophers*, who reject revelation altogether.——Some who have a little learning—a little acquaintance with science,

proudly think themselves superior to the simple truths of the Gospel.—Salvation appears to be generally “hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes.”

At the root of this opposition may be found *ignorance, love of pleasure, bigotry, prejudice, and pride.*

Hence the doctrines of the Gospel have been opposed—its ordinances changed—its discipline corrupted, and it has, in many instances, been secularized and made the instrument for procuring honor and wealth.

III. THAT THIS GOSPEL MUST BE DEFENDED.

1. *Not by coercion*, attempting to force men to embrace it under pains and penalties. Look at the ancient Crusades, and the bloody deeds of Popery—in the Inquisition, the racks, tortures, fires, etc. etc. The history of the “Man of sin,” in his pretended defence of the Gospel, is a history of deeds of blood.

Not by coercion in extorting money for its support from those opposed to it, for “God loveth a cheerful giver.”

Not by the exercise of the civil power, penal inflictions and extortions, some of which yet disgrace our land.

To all such modes of defensive warfare Christ was opposed. “My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence.” John 18 : 36. “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal,” etc. 2 Cor. 10 : 4.

(2.) It must be defended as *Paul defended it*. He is our example.

Christian experience constrained him to defend it. He believed the Gospel “to the saving of the soul.”

Christian and consistent deportment emboldened him to defend it. He lived the truths which he believed and taught. 1 Thess. 2 : 10; 2 Cor. 1 : 12.

Intimate acquaintance with the Gospel, obtained by reading, study, prayer; and Divine influence qualified him to defend it. Let the Church go and do likewise.

Paul defended it by *preaching*. So can the Church now by its various officers set for the defence of the Gospel. They are the *watchmen* on the walls of Zion; the leaders of the people—the ambassadors of Christ. They are “*set*” for this purpose—not self-appointed, but gifted, qualified, and called to it by the general voice of the Church.

It is to be defended

Valiantly. Not with timidity. It is the best cause. It is the revealer of Christ and immortality. Do earthly engagements call for enthusiasm? Surely this cause ought to kindle in the mind the most sacred ardor, burning zeal, and fervency. 2 Cor. 5 : 13, 14.

With cogency of argument. Let the Gospel, the evidences of its truth, and the efficacy of its power, be well understood.

With plainness of speech.

Calmly and dispassionately. "A soft answer turneth away wrath."

With constant prayer and dependence on the Spirit's teaching.

Finally, all Christians may spread this Gospel—all may defend it.

XLIV.—DELIGHTING IN GOD.

"Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."
—Ps. 37 : 4.

THE great Creator of the universe, the God of Providence, and of grace, is worthy of the supreme affection of all his creatures. Every other being, and every other thing, ought to be subordinate to him. How happy are they who have been enlightened and renovated so that they can say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee," etc.

This Psalm is an exposition of some of the hardest chapters in the book of providence, the advancement of the wicked, and the depression of the righteous, a solution of the difficulties thereof, and advice as to the conduct of God's people under such dark dispensations. Instead of fretting ourselves because of evil-doers, v. 1, we are advised to reflect on the short continuance of the ungodly on earth. "They shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb," v. 2; and then where will be their wealth, treasures, and, alas! their precious souls? While all around us is evanescent, let the Christian "trust in the Lord, and do good," etc., v. 3. And while others are making their heaven in earthly vanities, it will be ten thousand times more advantageous for him to delight in the Lord," etc., v. 4.

I. THE IMPORTANT DUTY RECOMMENDED: "Delight thyself in the Lord."

1. *What does this duty presuppose?*

(1.) *Reconciliation with God.* Man is a transgressor. As such God is his enemy. Man and his Creator are at variance. Man is an enemy by wicked works. Col. 1 : 21; Eph. 2 : 1-3. Can man in a state of rebellion delight in God? Do enemies delight in each other? Can two walk together except they be agreed? Amos 3 : 3.—But the method of reconciliation is proclaimed, 2 Cor. 5 : 18-20.

(2.) *Regeneration.* The unrenewed sinner hates God. He has no relish for his service. His soul has an evil bias. All his affections are impure and cannot rest on God.—To delight in God man must be born again. John 3 : 3, 5-7.—It is the office of the Spirit to renew the mind—to change the heart—to turn the sinner's aversion into relish, and his hatred into love.

(3.) *A subordinate estimate of all other objects* compared with God. The sinner idolizes the world—the creature—wealth—business engagements—secular enterprise. But when the Spirit regene-

rates the soul, the affections are elevated above the perishing objects of sense.

(4.) It also presupposes *love*. The love of a child for his Almighty Parent. Love arising from the Spirit's creation in his heart. Rom. 5 : 5. Love arising from a consciousness of having an interest in the Divine covenant. Love to him for what he has done for his soul. — There can be no delight in God without such love.

2. *What delighting in God implies.* It signifies to take sincere pleasure in whatever concerns him. Those who delight in him will be often thinking of him, and meditating upon his word. Rom. 7 : 22. Further it implies,

(1.) *The investigation of the Divine character.*

As revealed in his works. "The heavens declare his glory." Ps. 19 : 1, 2, etc. ; 8 : 1, etc. Science in all its branches reveals his wisdom, power, and love.

As revealed in his word. There patriarchs, priests, prophets, evangelists, and apostles, some of them inspired by his Spirit, declare his character. The dealings of God with his people, as narrated there, proclaim the infinity of his love. He that delights in God will delight in his word, as the revelation of his will—as the transcript of his mind. Ps. 19 : 7-11.

In his works and in his word the Christian sees the manifestation of the Divine perfections. He delights in his wisdom, for it guides him ; in his power, for it defends him ; in his omnipresence — in his omniscience, etc. etc.

(2.) To delight in God is *to rejoice in the work of redemption*. To wonder at the infinite love of God—at its fulness of supply for every spiritual want—at its freeness—at its infinite glorious results.

(3.) *To rejoice in our special interest in God's redeeming love.* To admire the cause of our first awakening to a sense of its necessity—to trace the first rays of Divine light upon our minds—to refer to the time of love when God sealed our pardon, etc. To rejoice in God as the God of our salvation.

(4.) *To seek solace from him* in the time of trouble, when all other sources of relief fail. Ps. 56 : 3.

(5.) *To trust in the guidance of his providence*, satisfied with its wisdom and love, though its operations are sometimes mysterious and inscrutable.

(6.) To take pleasure in *communion with him*.

(7.) To love his cause, and seek its prosperity.

II. THE GRACIOUS PROMISE MADE. "He shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

1. The fulfilment of this promise will depend upon the character of the desires to be satisfied. Observe, the promise respects,

(1.) The desires of a *renewed heart*. The desires of a man who delights in God. Desires of a holy nature. The godly man is anxious not to indulge a desire which he cannot form into a prayer.

(2.) Desires in unison with the will of God. "Not my will, but thine be done." 1 John 5 : 14.

(3.) Desires expressed to God by believing prayer. Matt. 21 : 22.

What is the desire of the heart of a good man ?

The desires of the righteous will always correspond with the objects of their delight. [~~See~~ These objects are stated under Part I., and may here be recapitulated] or proceed as follows : —

The Christian is not indifferent to his temporal wants. And God has promised to supply them ; though deprivation of them may sometimes be necessary for the purpose of chastisement. He acts properly when he says "Give me this day my daily bread." Isa. 58 : 13, 14.

He desires to comprehend more of the Will of God.

To enjoy a more sensible evidence of his interest in Christ, and of conformity to him.

To enjoy more intimate and sweeter intercourse with heaven.

To be more devoted to his service, more useful to the Church and to the world.

To be weaned from this world, and to be more than ever animated with the hope of a better.

To be reconciled to the loss of life, and to have faith in Christ mighty to conquer death.

To have an entrance ministered unto him abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

These are desires which God delights to meet. The *numerous promises* he has made prove this. His relation to his people, his love to them and delight in them, are a pledge that he will give them the desires of their heart.

He is their God, and they are his people ; he is their Shepherd, and they are his flock ; he is their rock, their fortress, their deliverer, their strength, their buckler, the horn of their salvation, and their high tower. He will never abandon them ; he will be their portion in time, and afterwards receive them to glory, as the purchase of his love, and as jewels in his crown. Blessed are they who delight in the Lord.

If all the monarchs whose commands supreme
Divide the wide dominion of this ball,
Should offer each his boasted diadem,
I would not quit thy favor for them all :
These trifles with contempt I would resign, —
The world's a toy, while I can call thee mine.

APPLICATION.

1st. Be thankful for the condescension of God in admitting us to delightful intercourse with him.

2d. Let the sinner stand in awe. He despises and hates God.

XLV.—THE SEPARATION OF THE RIGHTEOUS FROM THE WICKED.

“And before Him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.”—MATT. 25 : 32.

THERE are three important days in the existence of man: the day of his birth, the day of his death, and the day when he shall be judged. — At the day of his birth he commences an immortal existence; enters on a career, which will be lengthened out through an endless eternity. At the day of his death, his seed-time, his probation, and all his works shall end; his body shall be dissolved, and his soul pass into the world of spirits. At the day of judgment, all his thoughts, motives, and actions, will be scrutinized by the great Arbiter of life and death, and the character of them will decide his everlasting destiny. “We must all appear,” 2 Cor. 5 : 10.

I. THE GREAT AND SOLEMN CONVENTION. “Before him shall be gathered all nations.” Observe

1st. *The time when this convention shall take place.* “When the Son of man shall come in his glory.”

The day of judgment—the grand assize of the world—the day when the present dispensation shall close—when time shall stop, and eternity begin. The day of rapture to the holy; the day of overwhelming terror to the ungodly.

2d. *The august appearance of the Judge.*

He will be invested with all the prerogatives necessary for judging the world.—The Majesty of Christ in this respect will be sublimely conspicuous. “He shall come in his glory.”

Here he appeared as the “Son of man,” in human flesh, suffered contempt, laceration, and death from man. Suffered from the time of becoming the “Babe of Bethlehem,” till, as the “Man of sorrows,” he was made perfect through sufferings on the cross. But now, O how changed! He comes as *the Son of God*. “He shall come in his glory”—the glory of the Godhead and the glory of the Mediator combined. He will take the clouds for his chariot; he will come “in the clouds with power and great glory.” Matt. 24 : 30. — Compared with his power, the power of all earthly monarchs is but the power of the moth; and compared with his glory, the splendor of regal pomp is but the glimmering light of the glow-worm. He shall come with the glory of Omnipotence. That power which he employed to create the universe, he shall bring with him to punish his foes. He shall come with all the glory of his perfections shining brighter than ten thousand suns. With the glory of his spotless and exalted humanity, and with all the glorious majesty of his divinity. Ps. 50 : 3, 4, 6.

The *attendants* at his coming will be glorious. “And all the *holy angels* with him.” An innumerable multitude of celestial spirits will grace his train, and perform his will.

This appearance will be *judicial*. "Then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." May form some idea of this glorious throne by referring to Ezek. 1 : 26-28 ; Isa. 6 : 1-4 ; Dan. 7 : 9-10.—— The nations of the earth shall be *gathered before him*, or his bar. It will be a judicial throne.

3d. *The Assembly*. "Before him shall be gathered all nations." What a vast assembly!

(1.) They will be *raised from the dead* preparatory to the final separation. John 5 : 28, 29.

The earth and the ocean "will give up the dead which are in them." Every grave will open, its dust be reanimated, and living forms be seen rising from its dark chambers, over all the surface of the globe. The sea also, which has engulfed its myriads, shall give up its dead. And those still alive will undergo, substantially, the same great change as those who have been dead, and both will be invested with bodies incorruptible and immortal. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the globe will be repeopled, and the whole family of Adam, with their progenitor at their head, will stand up together, to be conducted to the bar of Christ, who will then be recognized as "God the Judge of all."

(2.) This convention, or gathering, will be effected *by the ministration of angels*. See Matt. 13 : 41 ; 24 : 31 ; Mark 13 : 27. They will be *irresistibly* gathered. All resistance will be vain. All attempts at concealment will be abortive. Job 34 : 22 ; Amos 9 : 2.

(3.) This convention will be *numerous*. "Before him shall be gathered *all nations*."

Characters of all descriptions : real Christians, mere professors, formalists, hypocrites, the profane, licentious, self-deceivers infidels, blasphemers, atheists.

Persons of all ages : youth, manhood, age.

Inhabitants of every nation, kindred, and tongue ; those privileged with the Gospel ; those who have despised and neglected it.

Yes, "all nations," all the inhabitants of the world, from Adam to his last-born son, shall be gathered before the throne!

'Tis here all meet ;
The shivering Iclander, and sunburnt Moor ;
Men of all climes that never met before,
And of all creeds, the Jew, the Turk, the Christian ;
Here the proud prince, and favorite, yet prouder,
His sovereign's keeper, and the people's scourge,
The hard oppressor, and the slave oppressed :
The warrior stern, who fought on fields of blood
To gain an empty fame. The wily statesman,
The unjust judge, must stand before the bar :
The widow and the orphan will be there.
The just, the good, the worthless, and profane,
The downright clown, and perfectly well-bred,
The fool, the churl, the scoundrel, and the mean, —
The people of all nations must stand there!

How vast the concourse then to be assembled! "Before him shall be gathered all nations." There is something overwhelming in gazing on large and assembled multitudes. A peculiar sensation

must be excited in witnessing a numerous army, equipped and ready for battle.——How appropriate the language of the prophet Joel! Ch. 3 : 12–15.

Dr. Dick makes a calculation as to the probable number of the beings who shall stand at the bar of judgment at the last day. The following paragraph is an abridgment of his calculation :

Suppose the earth, at an average, has always been as populous as it is now, and that it contains 8 hundred millions of inhabitants, and if we reckon 32 years for a generation, at the end of which period the whole human race is renewed ; it will follow that 146 billions 200 millions of human beings have existed since the creation, reckoning 5846 years from Adam to the present time. Had mankind never died, there would have been nearly 183 times the present number of the earth's inhabitants now in existence. If we suppose that before the close of time as many human beings will be brought into existence, as have already existed in past time, there will be found at the general resurrection, 292,400,000,000, or 292 billions, *. 400 millions of mankind.

Oh think of this vast convention of immortal beings, compared with which the armies of Waterloo, or those of Xerxes, are but a speck! Think of them all before the throne of the Son of Man, ready to be separated and judged!

II. THE MOMENTOUS SEPARATION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES. “And he shall separate them one from another,” etc.

1st. He will separate them into *two classes*; the righteous and the wicked, saints and sinners. “He shall discern between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not.”

These two classes are figuratively represented; as the chaff and the pure grain, as the tares and the wheat, and as the goats and the sheep. This latter emblem is very expressive. *Sheep*, which have ever been considered as the emblems of mildness, simplicity, patience, and gentleness, represent the genuine disciples of Christ. *Goats*, which are naturally quarrelsome, lascivious, and excessively ill-scented, were considered as the symbols of riotous, profane, and impure men. They here represent all who have lived and died in their sins. Ezek. 34 : 17; Zech. 10 : 3.

Separation implies previous union, or at least *association*. But sheep and goats were never penned or housed together, though they might feed in the same pasture, yet this was rarely allowed. So Virgil expresses it,—

* COUNTING A BILLION. — What is a billion? The reply is very simple: a million times a million. This is quickly written, and quicker still pronounced. But no man is able to count it. You count 160 or 170 a minute; but let us even suppose that you go as far as 200, then an hour will produce 12,000; a day 288,000; and a year, or 365 days, 105,120,000. Let us suppose now, that Adam at the beginning of his existence had begun to count, had continued to do so, and was counting still—he would not even now, according to the usually supposed age of our globe, have counted near enough. For to count a billion, he would require 9512 years, 34 days, 5 hours, 20 minutes, according to the above rule. Now supposing we were to allow the poor counter twelve hours daily for rest, eating, and sleeping—he would need 19,024 years, 69 days, 10 hours, 40 minutes.

"Thyrals and Corydon drove their flocks together:
Thyrals his sheep; Corydon his goats. —"

Both had their distinct flocks which fed in the same pasture; though they were only driven together for the convenience of the two shepherds, during the time of their musical contest.

But goats frequently broke through the barriers, and entered the inclosure of the sheep, and might cause considerable trouble to the shepherd in separating and dividing them; yet the welfare of the sheep depended upon this separation.

So the righteous and the wicked *necessarily* mingle together in this world, through secular engagements, family and relative ties, citizenship, etc., but they shall be separated then. — The wicked, actuated by impure motives, now often break through the sacred inclosure of the Church, having only the mask of profession; but then the goats shall be separated from the sheep — the mere dissembler from the Israelite indeed.

2. This separation will be *exact*. Though the multitude will be so vast, yet the character of each will be detected with the greatest precision. Every thought, desire, motive, and state will be known to the infallible Judge. What less than omnipotence and omniscience can effect such a separation of the whole human species?

There will be no mistake of character. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked, for," etc.

3. It will be *complete and just*. There will be no partiality.

He will make the separation in righteousness, according to his perfect law of equity. Isa. 11 : 4, 5; Acts 17 : 31.

So complete, that all will acknowledge the justice displayed in the separation. To the righteous, the separation will harmonize with their renewed and glorified natures. To the wicked it will appear as the consequences of their wilful rebellion. On earth they could not from the heart associate with the godly and engage in their services, and the same aversion will exist at the judgment-day, and they will therefore feel that they ought to be separated.

4. This separation will be to many *most surprising, degrading, and mortifying*.

Then the proud and wealthy will be humbled and brought down. Men of talent and genius, "wise men after the flesh," who received the applause of the multitude, will descend from their pinnacle of glory to contempt and infamy, and see infinitely exalted above them the poor despised Christian. Kings and princes, who were here flattered and idolized by their courtiers, and feared by the millions whom they governed with cruel and despotic sway, will then find their power and splendor, the pride of distinction, and the incense of homage, forever fled, and themselves degraded lower than was in this world the poorest slave who trembled under their frown, while probably that poor wretch has cast off his degradation, and risen to distinction and glory inexpressible. Then the warrior, the conqueror, the spoiler, the murderer of men, and the plunderer of a world, will find himself poorer than the poorest, himself conquered by his own fears and terrors, de-

spised, powerless, sunk, and miserable beyond conception.—Then the self-righteous will find his foundation to be baseless, and incapable of sustaining his deathless spirit amid the fiery ordeal. Loud may he have boasted of his works here—high may be his hopes, but he and the hypocrite, shall find their expectations dispersed like a vapor.—What mortification will the miser feel when he finds his gold so worthless!—What will the objects and pursuits of ambition appear then!—How will the votary of sense, the lover of pleasure, find themselves undeceived then!—How will they open their eyes in astonishment who have denied God's existence, Christ's divinity and mediation; and the claims of Christianity! What surprise when they gaze on him, and hear him say, Luke 19: 27. Then there will be "weeping and gnashing of teeth," such as the world never saw, when the rich, the splendid, the refined, and the noble, behold the clown, the beggar, and the slave, ready to "sit down in the kingdom of God, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and themselves thrust out."

5. This separation will, in many cases, be *awfully affecting*.

Shouldst thou behold thy brother, father, wife,
And all the soft companions of thy life,
Whose blended interest levelled at one aim,
Whose mixed desires sent up one common flame,
Divided far, thy wretched self alone
Cast on the left of all whom thou hast known,
How would it wound, what millions wouldst thou give
For one more trial, one day more to live?

What a distinction will then be made in families! Then some parents will ascend to glory everlasting, accompanied, in some cases, by one, two, three, or even by the whole offspring; and, awful thought! some will be accompanied by none! Some parents themselves will be left behind, and with failing eyes, and bursting hearts, will follow their children rising to the heavens, and bidding them an everlasting farewell. Brothers and sisters, mutually and tenderly beloved here, will then be parted asunder to meet no more. Those who have believed will be borne on angels' wings to the celestial temple; while those who have believed not will descend to the abodes of the lost. Lover and friend, husband and wife, who have associated here most affectionately, and endearingly, will find themselves then separated forever. It will be the case too with ministers and their hearers, with pastors and their flocks.

6. This separation will be *eternal*. They shall be divided—and never come together again. Great has been the anxiety when a friend has left his home for foreign service. Long may have been his tarrying away from his friends, but the hope of his return has cheered their hearts, and their friend has returned at last to calm all their anxiety. But this separation will be forever. There will be no return from perdition; none from paradise, to any common centre where parted friends may be reunited.—This separation is not for one, two, or more years, but forever. There will be an impassable gulf fixed. Luke 16: 26.

APPLICATION.

1. What is your state now? As some must then be separated to the right hand, and others to the left, what side do you occupy now?

2. Reconciliation to God through Christ is the only preparation for the last day.

8. Woe unto the undecided!

XLVI.—THE ENRICHING SAVIOUR.

"The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him."—Rom. 10 : 12.

THE Gospel is not confined to any nation or people. It is proclaimed and offered to the world. Mark 16 : 15. Once the Divine favor rested principally upon Israel, Rom. 9 : 4, 5, but it is now extended to the Gentiles. "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek," v. 12. The middle wall of partition is broken down, and believers of every nation may approach the mercy-seat.

I. THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST, THE GREAT ENRICHER. "The same Lord over all."

This statement is full of mighty import. It implies his Divinity, without which he could not be the enriching Saviour. He is called

1. "The same Lord," the same Divine Saviour as described, v. 4. *The end of the law*, and the procurer of *righteousness* for rebellious man. He lived in conformity to that law, and he endured its penalty on the cross, Rom. 3 : 20-26.

2. "The same Lord," as described, v. 9, "*Lord Jesus*, whom God raised from the dead." The Divine Saviour, who burst the barriers of the tomb, indicating that his death was successful—that his mediation was triumphant. By his resurrection he was "declared to be the Son of God with power."

3. He is said to be "*over all*." This expresses his universal dominion and government.

He is "Lord over all" the heavenly world, Eph. 1 : 20-22.

He is "Lord over all" the angels, Heb. 1 : 4-8.

He is "Lord over all" the earth, and hell, the abode of the lost, Phil. 2 : 9-11.

He is "Lord over all" the Church, Eph. 1 : 22, 23. The "government is upon his shoulder."

He is "Lord over all" the universe, Col. 1 : 15-17.

II. HIS ENRICHING INFLUENCE.

As "Lord over all" he is able to enrich. As the Mediator of the new covenant, he possesses an inexhaustible stock of spiritual blessings, by which he can "be rich unto all that call upon him." "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell."

1. He enriches the guilty one with the pardon of all his sins, however numerous and flagrant. 1 John 1 : 7 ; Acts 13 : 38.

2. The condemned by the law with deliverance and justification. Acts 13 : 39. Rom. 5 : 1; 8 : 1.

3. The unrighteous and defiled with cleansing grace and regenerating power, to make them "new creatures in Christ Jesus." 2 Cor. 5 : 17.

4. The outcast and abandoned, with adoption and all its precious privileges.

5. And what can be said more? For he is a fountain rich, full, free, and inexhaustible.

He enriches the ignorant with wisdom—the weak with strength—the fearful and depressed with courage and consolation—the soldier of the cross with armor, success, and conquest—the tempted and tried with support and a way of escape—the afflicted and bereaved with strength according to the day—the dying with the hope of immortality, and afterwards with heaven itself. He can make all grace to abound to his people. "He is their sun and their shield," etc. Ps. 84 : 11.

III. THE OBJECTS OF HIS ENRICHING GRACE. "Unto all that call upon him."

1. To call upon him implies a deep sense of need. None else will call upon him.

2. Believing prayer. Without faith it is impossible to please God.

3. To such he is rich without distinction. He spiritually enriches without distinction.

(1.) As to rank. The rich and the poor, the great and the low, the noble and the ignoble, the monarch and the peasant.

(2.) As to mental endowment or literary acquirements. He enriches the learned and the ignorant, the great philosopher and the man of small intellect.

(3.) As to age or sex. Male and female, the aged and the youth, are welcome to Christ.

(4.) As to nation. Jew and Gentile. This is asserted v. 12, and Col. 1 : 11.

(5.) As to enormity of crime and aggravation of guilt, if they only repent.

XLVII. — THANKSGIVING.

"Offer unto God thanksgiving."—PSALM 60 : 14.

IN the beginning of the Psalm the Divine majesty and glory are exhibited. So glorious a Being is worthy of the highest homage, and the most ardent praise. — But he will not be mocked with mere formal services. — Sacrifices the most costly and splendid; offerings the most munificent and pompous, presented to him without the heart,

are an abomination in his sight. — A charge of formality is brought against the Jews, v. 8, 9, etc. — In praise, in all worship, the heart is demanded.

I. THAT THE MERCIES OF GOD DEMAND THANKSGIVING.

Thanksgiving is a part of Divine worship, which consists of acknowledging him as the Source of all good, and rendering grateful homage to the power, wisdom, and goodness of God on that account.

Offer unto God thanksgiving,

1. *For temporal blessings.*

(1.) Thank him for your *existence*. You are fearfully and wonderfully made — and you are made for a noble purpose — for your own personal happiness and dignity here and in eternity, to the glory of God the Father.

(2.) For your *preservation*. Preserved you in health — from sickness — from death — from casualties — from evil courses — from damning crimes, degradation, and ruin.

(3.) For the blessing of *reason*. What a calamity is the suspension of the soul's faculties! The man sinks below the level of the beasts, and becomes more helpless and miserable than those who are guided by the instincts of their nature. See that man, once the learned philosopher, or the honorable statesman, or the eloquent advocate, or the brave general, or the clever theologian! O see him bereft of his reason, his faculties spoiled of their beauty, and the intellectual machinery of the soul in ruins! hear the clanking of his chains, the hysteric laugh, the frantic cry, or the heavy groan, and then offer to God thanks for the blessing of reason.

(4.) Thank God for *deliverances*. You may have been sick and nigh unto death; He hath raised you up. You have been exposed to temptation — snares, the snares of death, have been laid for your feet. God has delivered you. Had the temptation succeeded, what would you have been now? — what would you have suffered? — Some he has delivered from spiritual darkness — from secular embarrassment — from appalling poverty. Then offer to God thanksgiving.

(5.) Thank God for *Civil and Religious privileges*. What blessings are here. "He hath not dealt so with every nation." Compare our civil government with the despotic governments of the earth, forbidding the liberty of the press, and, in some cases, even the liberty of speech. Here, in our sea-girt isle we can worship God according to the dictates of our consciences, under our own vine, etc. Go, while thy tongue is free, and offer unto God thanksgiving.

Be thankful, too, for *peace*. Contemplate a field of battle and of bloody war. Listen to the noise of drums and trumpets, the clashing of swords, and the rattle of armor — listen to the groans of the wounded and the dying. See the garments rolled in blood. Mark those widows — those orphans — those desolated fields and dwellings — the expenditure of so much treasure — vast national financial burdens, and learn from hence to value peace, and offer thanksgiving to the God of peace.

2. *For the Gospel dispensation* and all its *privileges*.

(1.) Thank God for *the mission of Christ* to this world. It is the source of all true happiness. It is the Grand remedy for man's woes. It is the life of the world, salvation from perdition, and the mighty lever that exalts to heaven.

(2.) Thank God that you are *born in a land of Gospel light*. Millions in benighted lands are worshipping idols, reptiles, devils. Think of their loathsome impurities, and of their dreadful sufferings and painful rites, their tragic destiny, perishing without vision. — Offer to the God of light thanksgiving.

(3.) Offer praise to God for *Gospel ordinances and privileges*. The Sabbath-day is appointed for sublime and merciful purposes; it is a day on which the richest blessings are received — a day of delicious enjoyment — a day which is the epitome of heaven. —

Then you have the preaching of the Gospel and the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. By the first, God immediately addresses sinful men, graciously offering terms of reconciliation. In the second, he allows his people to have intimate fellowship with himself, and cheers their hearts by the whispers of his unchanging love.

3. For your *personal interest in spiritual blessings*.

Thank God for *your conversion*. What were ye more than others, that he should have chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth?

Thank God for *enlightening and quickening you*. When you sat in the region and shadow of death, the dayspring from on high visited you. When you had no more thought for God than a dead man, then he "quickened you." Eph. 2 : 1.

Thank God for *pardoning and justifying you*.

Thank God for *adopting love*. "Ye are the sons and daughters," etc.

Thank God for *sanctification*; for "though ye lay among the pots, ye are like a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

Thank him for *growth in grace*. "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree, and grow like the cedar in Lebanon."

Thank him for the *hope of perfection*; knowing that "he who hath begun the good work in you, will perfect it till the day of Jesus Christ."

Thank him for *supporting grace in the prospect of death*, for the promise of his presence then to enable you to conquer — for the hope of a glorious resurrection, and admission to immortal bliss.

II. THE MANNER OF OFFERING THANKS TO GOD.

1. Thanksgiving may be *mental*. When we indulge admiring, adoring, and affectionate thoughts of God, or meditate upon his graciousness with pleasure and delight.

2. It may be *vocal*. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth may be compelled to speak." In private—in the family—in the house of God.

3. With *reverence*. It is praise to the Great I Am, — to God, who is a Spirit, pure, infinite, Neh. 9 : 5; Ps. 91 : 1, 2; 95 : 1-3.

4. With *humility*. Unworthy recipients acknowledging the salvation

of God. Prodigals, returned outcasts, miserable sinners, confessing salvation to be all of grace.

5. Praise must be *practical*. This is called a "showing forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light." Tell others what he has done for you. Go, spread his truth—advance his cause. The persons upon whom Christ wrought miracles did this.—Paul, the persecutor, after his conversion, did this.—

6. *Ardently*. The greatness of the blessings demands fervent thanks. Life from the dead—translation from Satan's kingdom into the kingdom of God's dear Son—deliverance from perdition to the hope of heaven. Ps. 71 : 8; 138 : 1, 2.

III. ENFORCE THE DUTY.

1. It is *the command of God*. It was so under the Levitical economy, Lev. 7 : 12; much more so under the Gospel dispensation; 1 Cor. 9 : 11; Phil. 4 : 6; Col. 2 : 7.

2. It is a *striking evidence of spiritual vitality*. It indicates sensibility—experience—love to God.

3. It is *delightful*. Ps. 33 : 1; 147 : 1. Delightful to feel—beautiful to behold.

Sweet is the work, my God, my King,
To praise thy name, give thanks and sing,
To show thy love by morning light,
And talk of all thy truth at night.

4. It is *acceptable to God, and honors him*. Ps. 50 : 23; 2 Cor. 4 : 15. God neither needs our services nor our songs, as he is all perfection, and an everlasting harmony to himself, without the feeble notes that we can raise. yet through Christ he is well pleased with our imperfect praises. Where he has given his grace, the grateful heart is an instrument of music to him; and he loves it to be kept in tune, and to sound forth his praises.

5. It is the precursor of praise to be offered in the celestial temple. It is the practice-time, the rehearsal for the grand chorus of all the redeemed in heaven. We are tuning our hearts here for perfect praise there; Rev. 7 : 10–12.

When the Church militant shall be joined to the Church triumphant, O what voices, what songs of melody, what rapturous joys, will then be heard in heaven to all eternity, when Christ shall lead the worship, and the praises that have been growing for thousands of years, shall burst forth, and be diffused abroad, and all creation echo to the song, "Glory to God in the highest!" This is what the saints are waiting for; that which they ardently believe and hope they shall realize.

The Church triumphant and the Church below
In songs of praise their present union show;
Their joys are full; our expectation strong;
In life we differ, but we join in song:
Angels and we, assisted by this art,
May sing together, though we dwell apart.

XLVIII.—LIVING TO CHRIST.

“For me to live is Christ.”—PHIL. 1 : 21.

It is an important question to ask ourselves, For what am I living, and whither am I tending? — Paul derived his greatest bliss from his connection with Christ, and from living to his glory. This he expresses in the context, v. 20-23. “For me to live is Christ.” While I live, Christ is the life of all my graces and of all my joys. I am his property and servant, and Christ is my portion. And if I die, i. e., if I be called to endure martyrdom, this will be my gain:—I shall be saved from the troubles and difficulties of future life, and take possession of my heavenly inheritance. — This is the case with a true believer.

I. The grace of Christ is the principle of the Christian's life.
“By the grace of God I am what I am.”

It is this that quickens the dead soul. Did it not meet the Apostle when, as a persecutor, he journeyed to Damascus? Did it not turn the raven to a dove—the lion to a lamb? Eph. 2 : 1. Did it not transform the persecutor into a Christian, a meek and zealous apostle? “He preached the faith he once destroyed.” He formerly sought to murder the saints; but when converted, he said, “God is my witness how I long after you all in the bowels of Christ Jesus!” — The grace of Christ too *maintains* spiritual life, animates all its graces with vigor, and preserves it from destruction. 2 Cor. 12 : 9; Phil. 4 : 13; 1 : 6.

II. The dependence of a Christian's hope is alone on Christ.

The Apostle once trusted in his own righteousness. Once he looked to the law for justification; but “when the commandment came,” etc., Rom. 7 : 9. He then saw the law in its spirituality, in its extensive demands. His mind, as irradiated by the Spirit, perceived that his obedience was imperfect. — In Christ alone he found his salvation. See Phil. 3 : 4-10; also Gal. 2 : 16-21. His life was one of constant dependence upon Christ. So is the life of every Christian. He lives upon Jesus Christ, by faith and love, from day to day. What he was, what he said, what he did, what he suffered, what he revealed, what he purchased, what he promised, is the maintenance, the food, the support of his spiritual life, even as corporeal food is the support of the body.

III. Communion with Christ is the happiness of the Christian's life. Though invisible, the eye of faith sees him; though he speaks not audibly to the natural ear, he whispers by his Spirit to his soul.

The Christian life is one of mental and spiritual intercourse with the Redeemer. In the closet — in perusing his word — in the ordinances of God's house — in hearing the Gospel, he sees Christ, hears his voice, and feels the attractions of his love. Christ then is the life and joy of his soul. — See John 14 : 23. This is the very es-

sence of the Christian life, "Our fellowship," etc., 1 John 1 : 8. — We may as well suppose that two friends, who cordially love one another, can live in the same house, and yet have no conversation, never see each other, as picture to ourselves a Christian without any communion with Christ.

IV. *To serve Christ is the employment of the Christian's life.* Paul said on one occasion, "For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve." He gloried in the service of Christ. Rom. 1 : 9. To the Church of Corinth, he said, 2 Cor. 12 : 15. For the Church at Philippi he was willing to suffer martyrdom. Phil. 2 : 17.

His servants they are who do his commandments. They feel that he has a claim to every talent, to every moment, and to all their possessions. In every sphere assigned them by his providence they labor cheerfully — heartily as unto the Lord.

V. *To love Christ is the great engagement of the Christian's affections.* "We love him because he first loved us." And Paul felt the mighty influence of Christ's love. 2 Cor. 5 : 14.

The Christian regards Christ as "altogether lovely," as "fairer than the children of men," possessing every divine and moral excellence. He regards him as the Author and Finisher of his faith — the foundation of his hope — his divine Surety — the Ransomer of his soul, and his Almighty and everlasting Friend. He therefore loves him, and says, "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" etc. This love is not merely professional, but practical.

VI. *To be conformed to Christ is the Christian's strongest desire.* This is the grand meaning of the Apostle: "To me to live is Christ." I devote my whole being to him, and through grace, I am conformed to his image. I do not value my existence at all, but as it is consecrated to his glory.

The Christian life consists in its devotedness and conformity to Christ. He "left us an example that we," etc. "Whether I am a preacher," says the good man, "a statesman, a magistrate, a tradesman, a mechanic, or a husbandman; whether I am a master or a servant, in affluence or poverty; whatever my station or lot in life may be, it is the great object of my life to be governed by the precepts, influenced by the Spirit — to exercise the temper, and live to the honor of Christ." To honor him I employ my time, my bodily strength, my mental powers, my property, and my influence, as he has directed in his precepts, and by his example.

It is my *habitual aim* to glorify him who loved me and gave himself for me. His truth — his cause — his people, are dear to me, and I will seek their advancement in the world.

VII. *To be ready for the coming of Christ is the Christian's daily concern.* "Blessed are those servants," etc. Luke 12 : 37.

To "be ready" the Christian clings to Christ — rests on his finished work — keeps faith alive by the use of all appointed means. He is anxious to have the graces of the Spirit in lively exercise — to be like

the "wise virgins who took oil in their vessels with their lamps," Matt. 25 : 4. — If there is a good supply of God's grace in the heart, the lamp of profession will be radiant. — The coming of Christ by death may to some have a sombre aspect, but the believer "loves his appearing." He "looks for that blessed hope," etc. Titus 2 : 13.

APPLICATION.

1. *Humility.* We have lived more to ourselves, to the world, etc., than to Christ.

2. *Prayer.* Confession. Petition for forgiveness — for renovation — for strength — that we may live to Christ.

3. *Hope.* Those who live to Christ will be prepared for death, and they will find *death to be gain.*

XLIX.—DEATH THE BELIEVER'S GAIN.

"To die is gain." — PHIL. 1 : 21.

THOUGH the Christian may sometimes be influenced by the glittering things of earth, yet nothing appears so valuable to his mind as religion and its ultimate consequences. "To live is Christ, and to die is gain." — The blessedness of the place to which he is journeying — the grand disclosure of light and glory which he is to realize there; to say nothing about the cessation of his conflicts with sin and Satan, and all his trials in this world, make him sometimes say with the Apostle, "Having a desire to depart," etc., v. 23. While Paul delighted in the service of Christ on earth, and was willing to continue in it as long as God should permit, he longed to be with Christ, to behold his glory, and to converse with the Captain of his salvation. "To die is gain."

Observe, "To die is gain." How can death be gain, when it is styled an *enemy*, and "the king of terrors"? Do not all wish to avoid death? Is it not the aim of every one to prolong life to its utmost extent? Would not every one permanently abide in this world? No. Those who have the life of God in them, say, "We would not live away." "To die is gain." The black river of death, in which we are to be "unclothed" of our mortal dress, terrifies us; but Christ will bear us through its dark surges, and make us more than conquerors. Standing on the brink of eternity, surveying the King in his beauty, and the glorious realities of the land that is afar off, we hope to triumph: "O Death, where is thy sting," etc.

The great John Foster beautifully observes: "What a superlatively grand and consoling idea is that of death! Without this radiant idea, this delightful morning-star, indicating that the luminary of eternity is going to rise, life would, to my view, darken into midnight melancholy. Oh! the expectation of living here, and living thus always, would

indeed be a prospect of overwhelming despair. But thanks to that decree that dooms us to die — thanks to that Gospel which opens the vision of an endless life — and thanks above all, to that Saviour-friend who has promised to conduct all the faithful through the sacred trance of death into scenes of paradise and everlasting delight."

At death the Christian gains

I. *An infinitely superior place of residence.* He enters heaven—the palace of the great King.——This world is a desert—a wilderness—a valley of tears—an aceldama, or field of blood—a land of death.——But heaven—O that is the New Jerusalem, the better, heavenly country, where God the Mediator, angels pure and bright, saints perfect and glorified, forever dwell. Pure is its atmosphere, fragrant are its flowers, melodious is its music, ever verdant are its trees, pellucid are its fountains, and golden its streets. But who can conceive, who can declare its glory?——To die and enter that heaven will be gain. Rev. 21, etc.

II. *Vision without obscurity.* Christ's residence is in the highest heavens, where God reveals his glory, and manifests himself to all that are around him. As the reward of his sufferings and death, God highly exalted him, etc. It is there that his Divinity shines through the humanity with ineffable brightness, and there he is beheld in all the moral grandeur of the only begotten Son of God. There he is seen as the great Mediator—the Lamb slain from, etc. There the riches of his infinite love—the treasures of his grace, etc., etc., are developed.——

Believers shall see him there — walk with him in white — sit on his throne — hear his voice — see his glory. How transporting will be the sight! Isa. 6 : 1, etc.; Dan. 7 : 9; Rev. 1 : 13, etc.; 14 : 1.——They are *sure* to see it: if children, then heirs, etc., 1 John 3 : 2. For this the Saviour prayed, John 17 : 24.——No longer see him dimly by the eye of faith—but clearly, without a veil between. 1 Cor. 13 : 9, 10, 12; Rev. 22 : 4.

III. *Holiness without sin.* The very existence of sin will be destroyed, Rev. 21 : 27. Sin here is the ruin of man—the ruin of his immortal soul. It has blighted and blasted the world, and filled it with impurity, misery, and death.

The Christian has here to struggle with sin in his members—to wrestle with a depraved heart, Rom. 7 : 18—with sin in his family—in his neighbors—in his business transactions—in society at large. There he sees its operations, and laments its effects. But in heaven the Christian shall gain purity without sin. All the remains of sin, and the dregs of corruption are left forever behind. No condemning conscience is found there. No unhallowed appetites are found there. No disordered affections exist there. No appearance or vestige of evil is found there. Every child of God is pure as Christ is pure—is perfect as his Father in heaven is perfect. Child of mortality, heir of corruption! look forward to thy sinless and perfect home, and learn that to die will be gain.——The Christian will gain

IV. *Employment without weariness.* The employment there will be adoration and praise, like that of angels, Rev. 5 : 11, 12 ; 7 : 9-12. — It will be the service of love — of holy converse with each other. — It will be a service of delight and ever-increasing interest. A service in which there will be no weakness, and no coldness. It will be with the strength and vigor of immortal youth, and performed under the influence of burning love. A service without weariness. Here we are soon fatigued and weary in God's service. — But the cause of such lassitude will there be forever ended. Serve him day and night, Rev. 7 : 15. The themes of interest will be undying — the study of them will ever be intense. The love will ever burn — the zeal will ever flame. A wearied seraph will never be found there. Therefore to die will be gain.

V. *Society without temptation.* Society in this world is not perfect. Every one possesses a depraved heart, deceitful and desperately wicked. The influence which some exert by their example, their creed, their erroneous principles, and their seductive arts, is frequently ruinous. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." The aged tempt the young — the parent his child, the male the female, and the female the male. So long as man inhabits this globe, he has various excitements to sin, many enemies, external and internal, both plotting his ruin, and instigating him to throw up his allegiance to the living God. — The great Agent producing the temptations surrounding us is Satan, "the Spirit that now worketh." Eph. 2 : 1.

But there will be no Satan in heaven ; for he "shall be cast into the bottomless pit," Rev. 20 : 3. None of his emissaries will be there ; for the wicked will be driven away in his wickedness to his own place. There the infidel, the atheist, and the holder of error, will never disseminate their poisonous and soul-destroying principles. There the libertine will never spread his snares to seduce the amiable and unsuspecting. There the extortionate and unjust will never trespass on the rights of others. In that blessed society there will be no insincerity of profession to create distrust — no misunderstandings to alienate esteem — no fickleness of disposition to produce a change of principle — the individuals who compose the aggregate body of God's redeemed people will be of one heart ; and in the whole range of heaven, from its centre to its circumference, each inhabitant shall ever find himself surrounded by kindred minds, judicious associates, and faithful friends. There will be no strife between Abraham and Lot — no contention between Paul and Barnabas. Amongst the innumerable throng, there will not be one jarring interest to disquiet their repose — not one selfish passion to interrupt the spontaneous feeling of pure beneficence — nor one sordid spirit to lower the moral elevation of the general body. Society will be perfect. All will breathe the spirit of perfect love which casteth out all fear. To die will be gain.

VI. *Union without separation.* Here Christian association is frequently sweet and delightful. "Behold how good." — What tender endearments exist in family association ! — Sweet and strong is the bond of human friendship. But that bond

dissolved. Misunderstandings may break it. Change of residence, length of absence may injure it, but death is sure to dissolve it. The Church must surrender to death its choicest members—it must part with its ministers, however faithful and devoted. The patriarch Jacob must part with his beloved Rachel—David must be distressed for his beloved Jonathan, and mourn the decease of his rebellious Absalom. A voice is frequently heard in Rama, Rachel weeping for her children, etc. The widow of Nain must carry her son to the silent tomb. The sisters of Bethany, Martha and Mary, must consign their brother Lazarus to the dust. A husband dies, and the heart of his wife is well-nigh broken. A wife breathes her last, and the husband bows his head in anguish. Children gather around the corpse of their parent, and with bursting hearts exclaim, “Our earthly stay has perished!”—How many can say, “Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness.” Ps. 88 : 18.

Friend after friend departs:
Who hath not lost a friend?
There is no union here of hearts,
That finds not here an end!
Were this frail world our final rest,
Living or dying none were blest.

But “blessed are the dead who die in the Lord,” for heaven is the place of *reunion and mutual recognition*.

There is a world above,
Where parting is unknown;
A long eternity of love,
Formed for the good alone:
And faith beholds the dying here,
Translated to that glorious sphere.

The hope of reunion in a better state is transporting. It was so to some of the ancients. “O renowned day,” exclaimed the Roman orator, “when I shall have reached the Divine assemblage of those minds with which I have congenial predilections, and shall escape this untoward and uncongenial throng.”——David contemplated reunion with his child, “I shall go to him,” 2 Sam. 12 : 23. Paul expected to meet and unite with the Christians at Thessalonica at the great day of judgment. See 2 Cor. 4 : 14. Christians shall be “gathered together unto Christ,” 2 Thess. 2 : 2. See also 1 Thess. 2 : 19. 20. It is evident the Apostles expected to meet in glory, and to recognize those whom they had been instrumental in bringing to Christ, 1 Thess. 4 : 13–18. To die will be gain.

VII. *Pleasure without pain*. At God’s “right hand there are pleasures for evermore,” hence pain will never follow pleasure ; it will never be experienced at all. Rev. 21 : 4.——In this world there is no perfect enjoyment. The sweetest cup of earthly bliss has always more or less of the drops of the ocean of bitterness mingled with it, and the brightest day of joy is invariably succeeded by the dark night of sorrow. This world is a desert, and contains not the fruit of the garden of Eden, nor the milk and honey of the land of promise. Here the pleasures of sin are but for a season, and they always leave a sting. But in heaven, pleasures will be

pure, holy, and exquisite, ever yielding satisfaction and joy.——
To die will be gain.

VIII. *Triumph without conflict.* The glorified bear the palms of victory. Rev. 7 : 7, 9. For they "have fought a good fight," etc. They have been "faithful unto death," and have received "the crown of life." They have overcome, and therefore they have sat down with Christ on his throne. Rev. 3 : 21. The Captain of their salvation led them on from conquering to conquer, till every enemy was completely subdued: their triumph was honored with the acclamations of angels and the shouts of perfected spirits. Their triumph is complete—final—and everlasting. No foe will ever attack them again.——To die is gain.

IX. *Satisfaction without end.* "As for me, I shall," Ps. 17 : 15. It may be truly said of the New Jerusalem, Ps. 36 : 8. In this world nothing satisfies long. But in heaven an infinite God possesses an infinite good, by which he can satisfy the boundless desires of all his people. "In his presence there is fulness of joy," etc. Delightful thought! "Pleasures for evermore!!"——
What is the great end of faith? "Everlasting life." John 3 : 16. See also 2 Cor. 5 : 1; 2 Cor. 4 : 17, 18. Then the Sabbath shall never end—its services shall never tire. Communion shall never cease. The Sun of righteousness shall never be clouded. "So shall we ever be with the Lord." To die will be gain.

APPLICATION.

1. This gain can only be secured by faith in Christ and devotedness to him. "To me to live is Christ." Without such a disposition we cannot enter heaven.

2. See the difference in the states of the righteous and the wicked at death. The one gains immense and eternal bliss—the other sustains an incalculable loss——.

3. Pray for Divine influence, that the life of Christ may be formed in you.

L.—CHRISTIAN ZEAL.

"Be zealous." — Rev. 3 : 19.

An interest in the Divine favor is more valuable than the possession of the whole world. "His favor is life," and "his loving-kindness is better than life." The value of that favor is best understood at a dying hour, when all earthly pursuits and objects are deprived of their charms.——To possess and enjoy that favor, zeal is essentially necessary. The men of this world are zealous after vanity—and should we be cold and frigid after a kingdom and a crown? "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence."——Matt. 11 : 12.

The language is addressed to the lukewarm church of Laodicea——

their state was wretched. It was high time to awake from their lethargy—to be zealous and to repent. Zeal in connection with Divine aid was alone sufficient for the deliverance of the Church at Laodicea.

I. THE OBJECTS OF CHRISTIAN ZEAL.

Zeal is the opposite to lukewarmness, and implies earnestness of mind or passionate ardor in favor of any person or cause. It includes a principle of universal benevolence and an ardent desire to communicate the blessings of the Gospel to others. Like its intimate companion, *wisdom*, "it is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits," etc. James 3 : 17. Be zealous for

1. *Personal religion.* To have the assurance that we are interested in the salvation of Christ—that his Spirit has enlightened us—that his grace has saved us.——Our profession may be flaming; our charity may abound—we may commiserate the state of others. But it will avail us nothing unless *we* are born again——.

2. *The conversion of our relatives.* Next to ourselves they claim our zealous efforts for their conversion. Can we bear to think of their perdition? —— See Esther 8 : 6.

3. *The conversion of our fellow-creatures in general.* The future destiny of sinners is awful to contemplate.——It is the effect of the Gospel to cause its recipients to seek the salvation of others — not to live to themselves, but to others.

4. *To promote the unity, peace, and prosperity of the Church.* ——Be not indifferent about this. Union is strength. Peace is lovely and attractive to sinners; but strife repels.——Prosperity indicates the presence and blessing of God.——How few do this! ——How many are lukewarm!

II. THE MANIFESTATION OF ZEAL.

1. It is manifested by *deep affection for the miseries of our fellow-men.* Ps. 119 : 158; Jer. 9 : 1.

2. It is not merely *professional.* Not merely expresses desire to do good; but "to do good and to communicate, it forgets not." There are actions as well as words.

3. It manifests itself by *prayer*—ardent, believing, and importunate. He that is anxious about his soul, and the souls of others, will take the matter to God. James 5 : 16.

4. *By self-consecration.* Of talent—of time—of influence—money.

5. *By consistent deportment.* The zeal of a holy and consistent man is a beautiful manifestation, and powerful in its influence. Matt. 5 : 16.——Many have zeal but not knowledge—are deficient in holiness of conduct.

6. *Defence of the truth.* The Gospel is opposed—assailed—its truth denied—its doctrines misrepresented. The language of Christian zeal is, "I am set for the defence of the Gospel."

III. THE MOTIVES TO CHRISTIAN ZEAL.

1. The object of Christian zeal is *pre-eminently good*.

(1.) *The salvation of the immortal soul.* The value of the soul. — It is ruined by sin, perishing. — A great salvation is provided for it, — a salvation designed to raise it from everlasting perdition to everlasting glory.

(2.) Nothing great and good in this respect *can be accomplished without zeal*. This is the case even in worldly enterprise.

2. It promotes the glory of God. It shows forth his praises. It displays the riches of Divine grace in those who are saved through human instrumentality.

3. *It has the promise of success.* "Be not weary in well-doing, for," — Isa. 53 : 10, 11; Ps. 126 : 5, 6.

4. *It is enforced by Scripture examples.*

We are encompassed about with a great cloud of witnesses. The patriarchs — the prophets. Consider Elijah, 1 Kings 19 : 10. Moses when he descended from the mount and beheld the idolatry of the people. Ex. 32 : 26. Then the Apostles. Look at Paul, Rom. 9 : 1; 10 : 1. Then look at Luther, Melancthon, Wickliffe, Knox, Whitfield, Wesley, etc. Look at some of the Missionaries.

Look at angels. Ministering spirits — flames of fire — seraphs, burning ones. Consider Jesus Christ. "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."

APPLICATION.

1. Humility. What have we done for Christ who did so much for us? — What are we compared with him and some of his zealous servants?

2. Repentance and holy resolution, through Divine grace, "to be zealously affected always in a good thing." Personal happiness is suspended upon it.

3. Sinners, the zeal of the Church to promote your interests will rise up to condemn you at the day of judgment, if you repent and believe not.

LI. — INFANT SALVATION.

"And her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne." — REV. 12 : 5.

THESE words are chosen as the foundation of some remarks on Infant Salvation. Their primary reference is not to this subject, but in their application to it they are calculated to assuage parental grief, and induce submission to the Divine Will. — Can there be a more pleasing and enrapturing thought than that of the salvation of infants? Though they have perished like an early flower, yet their departure from us has been arranged and superintended by the God of all grace; who,

having at their creation endued them with an immortal principle, has provided for them an eternal inheritance. — Weep not, therefore, bereaved parent, weep not, for “thy child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.”

Consider,

I. THE DEATH OF CHILDREN.

The death of infants is a very common event. The language of the prophet is peculiarly applicable to them, “All flesh is grass,” etc. Isa. 40 : 6, 7. When we consider the tenderness of their frame, and the numerous accidents and diseases to which they are liable, and that many of their complaints in infancy cannot be perfectly ascertained, and that they may be injured by the very means applied for their relief, — it is surprising that they ever reach maturity.

The most accurate statistics prove that at least a third of the human race die in infancy. — How few families then escape the loss of infants! Death takes away their dearest treasure, and disappoints the ardent expectations of their hearts. The child may be lovely — the heart may be riveted to it by a love approximating to idolatry, yet death blights all its beauty, and like a withered flower, it returns to its original dust.

Death found strange beauty on that cherub brow,
And dashed it out. There was a tint of rose
On cheek and lip; he touched the veins with ice,
And the rose faded. Forth from those blue eyes
There spoke a wistful tenderness, — a doubt
Whether to grieve or sleep, which Innocence
Alone can wear. With ruthless haste he bound
The silken fringes of their curtaining lids
Forever. There had been a murmuring sound,
With which the babe would claim its mother's ear,
Charming her even to tears. The spoiler set
His seal of silence. But there beamed a smile,
So fixed and holy, from that marble brow, —
Death gazed and left it there; he dared not steal
The signet-ring of Heaven.

Consider,

1. That the death of infants is *the result of transgression*. The threatening to our first parent was, “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” The prohibition was disregarded, and the threatening was executed: “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” Hence the Apostle argues, Rom. 5 : 12–14.

Infants have never been practical transgressors, and yet they die. They are liable to bodily suffering and death. They are treated as Adam merited to be treated. Though guiltless in themselves, they sinned in their great public head. The sin of Adam affected not only himself, but his whole posterity. Whatever he did had the same effect upon the Divine law, and bore the same relation to the Divine government, as if done by all his offspring. His fall was not the *fall of Adam*, but the *fall of Man*. “In him all die, for in him all have sinned.” Infants as well as adults — those who never come to years of understanding, as well as those who live to hoary hairs, and in much iniquity.

2. The death of children is *painfully affecting*.

(1.) As it frequently involves *physical pain and suffering*.

This is peculiarly distressing to parents; and many a mother feels as if she had rather lie down in the place of her suffering babe, and bear all its pains herself. It sobs, and struggles, and is convulsed, but can utter no complaint, — can tell none of its sorrows.

(2.) The death of a child *disappoints the hopes, and blasts the prospects of its parents*.

Perhaps it has been spared to multiply its attractions and endearments. It is the offspring of conjugal love and endearment, and the parents exclaim, "This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands." Gen. 5 : 29.

One looks to his child as his prospective successor in his secular calling, or office; another hopes that he may rise to eminency and honor; another that his child will be the comfort of his old age; and the man of wealth regards his child as his future heir; but alas! all these expectations are cut off! "Childhood and youth are vanity."

The dear delights we here enjoy
And fondly call our own,
Are but short favors borrowed now,
To be repaid anon.

Thus David was affected by the loss of his child, 2 Sam. 12 : 22, 23. Thus Rachel wept for her children, and refused to be comforted, Matt. 2 : 18. And thousands of hearts have bled when summoned to deposit the remains of their darling offspring in the darksome grave.

But ah! my spirits fall,
I feel a pang untold,
Those ruby lips so pale!
That blushing cheek so cold!
And dim those eyes of "dewy light,"
That smiled and glanced so sweetly bright.

To lay that darling form,
So lovely e'en in death,
Food for corruption's worm,
The mouldering earth beneath!
Oh, worse to me than twice to part,
Than second death-stroke to my heart.

(3.) Sometimes infant mortality is *induced by parental crimes, physically considered*. Some sinful habits, some courses of licentiousness, produce disease, which, in some cases, is entailed upon the offspring, and it is tortured with pain and dies. Dies! through the folly of its parent. O affecting thought! for a parent thus to murder his child!

3. The death of children is *an act of sovereign mercy*. The great Creator has a right to do as seemeth good in his sight. — He often takes away a child instead of a guilty parent. "The landlord (says an old writer) may distrain on any part of the premises he chooses."

In death children are taken from the evil to come. It is a visitation of greater mercy than the bestowment of protracted life, a sceptre and a kingdom. It is a subject of gratulation as well as condolence. Your

child is found—he might have been lost. He is alive where life is free from peril. He might have lived to perish; now he has died to live forever. Though he is no longer with you, he is with your best Friend, and where you will shortly be; he has taken him under his own immediate care. The King delights to honor him, and therefore he has called him from a distant province, and placed him near his throne. O then weep not, though the reaper Death has blighted your hopes. He was commissioned to do it by him who does all things well.

Death gazed at the flowers with tearful eyes,
He kissed their drooping leaves;
It was for the Lord of Paradise
He found them in his sheaves.

"My Lord hath need of these flow'rets gay,"
The Reaper said and smiled;
"Dear tokens of the earth are they,
Where he was once a child.

"They all shall bloom in fields of light,
Transplanted by my care,
And saints upon their garments white,
These sacred blossoms wear."

And the mother gave in tears and pain,
The flowers she most did love;
She knew she should find them all again,
In the fields of light above.

II. THAT AT DEATH THE SOULS OF CHILDREN ARE CAUGHT UP UNTO GOD, AND TO HIS THRONE.

This is denied by persons of atheistical principles. They assert that a child is no more than an animal, which, when life is extinct, is resolved into its primitive elements, to be organized no more as a living being.

This absurd idea is contrary to reason and to Scripture. "God made nothing in vain;" but the annihilation of infants supposes that he has, and that the creation of man leads to mere animalism. Such principles degrade man, and detract from the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, so conspicuous in his sublime purposes devised for the welfare of the human family.

There are some too who believe in the *perdition of infants*. They have no higher notion of a God of love than to suppose that he will punish eternally creatures whom the Scriptures represent to be innocent as to personal and actual transgression, and whose condition depended entirely upon himself.

The creation of infants for such a purpose is monstrous. Who could love such a Creator? Who could trust him? But the God we worship is not Moloch, and the punishment in a future state for which we contend, is the effect of personal and actual rebellion against God, of which infants are incapable. We turn away from such narrow-minded bigots, and inhuman and system-hardened theologians, who, thank God, are rapidly coming to extinction, to that Saviour who gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom, especially when transplanted from earth to heaven.

My child is dead, may the Christian parent say, but it is only his

mortal part that rests in silence. His spirit has "*been caught up unto God, and to his throne.*" He is one of the redeemed who throng the courts of heaven, and surround the throne of the Redeemer. Boundless perfection constitutes his felicity, unceasing praises dwell upon his lips, and seraphic love to Jesus dwells in his soul. The light of heaven encircles him, and its splendors delight his soul. His vision is unclouded, and penetrates into the deep things of God. I see him among the glorified throng, now bending in adoration of the King of kings, now a commissioned herald of mercy to distant worlds. Perhaps, sometimes he hovers around my dwelling, an angel of the Lord encamping near my tent. And when I die, perhaps, he will stand at heaven's portals, the first to usher me into the presence-chamber of the Most High. Transporting thought! I shall see my child again, and we shall never, never part.

Oh, this is blest relief!
My fainting heart it cheers;
It cools my burning grief,
And sweetens all my tears;
These eyes shall see my darling then,
Nor shed a parting tear again.

What then is the Christian's warrant for this expectation? The salvation of infants may be argued,

1. From the *justice of God*. Justice among men means rendering to every one his due, according to established law. Divine justice acts in the same way. But law is a revelation of will to a being capable of understanding it; promises and threatenings are only made to such. Infants are not within the sphere of justice, thus considered. Of law they can know nothing. They cannot therefore be subject to its penalties.

The everlasting perdition of beings incapable of sinning, exhibits existence in nothing but misery, admits of no compensation, and is contrary to the nature of all justice, both human and Divine.

2. From the *mercy of God as manifested by the death of Christ*. "His tender mercies are over all his works." If his mercy be so universal, then it provides for the salvation of all infants. An adult may be the object of that mercy, and yet perish by rejecting it. But mercy to dying infants must be a "free gift," independent of all conditions, of which they are incapable. They have indeed a corrupt nature; but the healing power of grace is provided. They are also liable to eternal death; but this is entirely conditional, and can only take effect on them as actual transgressors, as rejectors of Divine mercy, should they live to become such.

This then is the glorious principle: "The free gift is come upon all men to justification of life." That justification is to be received by faith by all who are capable of believing; but it is bestowed by a sovereign act of grace on those who die before they are capable of believing, or it would be no free gift to them.

Hence the pious John Newton observes, that infants of all nations and kindreds, without exception, who die before they are capable of sinning, "after the similitude of Adam's transgression," who have done

nothing in the body of which they can give an account, are included in the election of grace, and that "it is not the will of our Father in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." In their case election may have its richest illustration, and sovereignty its sublimest victory.

3. From the gracious regard of Christ to children and the intimations which he gave of their salvation.

It is the opinion of learned commentators that the language of Christ, Matt. 18: 1-14, applies to children literally. Mr. Booth says "it has a smiling aspect on the final state of such children as die in infancy." Christ there institutes a parallel between "these little ones," and such as believe in him. He warns his disciples against offending them, or causing them to sin—referring to children and disciples. The reason he assigns is the favor of God to both, v. 10. "Their angels," their disembodied spirits, "do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." And though both are lost through Adam, yet he says, "For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost," v. 11. See also verse 14. The child and the disciple alike belong to his fold; it is not his will that either should perish; and to save both Christ came and died.

See also Matt. 19: 13-15; Mark 10: 13-16. Jesus was indeed a lover of children.—He was displeased with his disciples who forbade their approach, and graciously said, "Suffer," etc., assigning as the ground of his pleasure, "for of such is the kingdom of heaven." The kingdom of heaven is composed of them, they are its subjects, and partakers of all its blessings. On this declaration he acted: "He took them up in his arms, put his hands on them, and blessed them."

"It jars," says one, "with all the feelings of humanity and reason to suppose that the Saviour, who blessed them on earth, rejected them in heaven—that He who welcomed them around him in his humiliation, should repel them from his presence in his glory. Can we suppose, that when these infants died in infancy (and that some of them did die in infancy is extremely probable), the very same voice that said in tones of mercy, 'Suffer these infants to come unto me,' would say to these very infants at the judgment seat, 'Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels!' It is impossible. The same mouth, on the same subjects, and with the same amount of merit or demerit, cannot pronounce at once blessing and cursing."

APPLICATION.

1. In all bereavements of children be submissive to the Divine Will. Guard against excess of sorrow. Sorrow not as those without hope. Mark the Divine wisdom. He has taken them from the evil to come.

2. Anticipate reunion with them in heaven.

Oh, when a mother meets on high
The babe she lost in infancy,
Hath she not then, for pains and fears,
The day of woe, the watchful night,
For all her sorrows, all her tears,
An overpayment of delight?

3. Let the death of children remind you of your own. "I shall go to him," etc., 2 Sam. 12 : 23. How solemn, how beautiful was the reflection of Dr. Doddridge after the interment of a child: "And now one of our family is gone to take possession of the sepulchre in all our names. Ere long I shall lie down with my child. Perhaps many of the feet that followed it, shall attend me thither. It is a warning of Providence that these concluding days of my life may be more regular, more spiritual, more useful than the former."

LII.—WELL WITH THOSE WHO FEAR GOD.

"Yet surely I know it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him."—ECCLES. 8 : 12.

THE Scriptures everywhere preserve that great and important distinction of character which divides the whole of mankind in all ages, and which alone shall exist at the last day,—the righteous and the wicked. This too is mentioned in such a manner, as if no account was to be made of any other distinction. In the concerns of the present life men are distinguished by nation, by birth, by rank and title; but God distinguishes them only by character, for he is no respecter of persons.

Great importance is attached to the "end" of things; and we are always taught, that only is well which ends well.—Wickedness, however it may delight the sinner, will have an awful result.—Piety, however it may be neglected and despised, will have a glorious termination.—"Surely I know," etc. This is powerfully described by Solomon in the context.

I. THE CHARACTER HERE MENTIONED: "Them that fear God."

The fear of God is that principle which reverences God, and respects his authority. It is one of the great blessings of the new covenant, produced in the heart by the Holy Spirit. Jer. 32 : 39, 40; Mal. 4 : 2.

He that fears God, reverences him in the manifestation of his perfections—his majesty and glory—his omniscience—omnipresence—his justice and holiness—his infinite goodness.——But observe

1. Such a fear is *the result of regeneration*. An unrenewed man does not fear God. Rom. 3 : 18.——But regeneration turns the heart from unlawful objects to God as the chief good. Gal. 6 : 15, 16.

2. *The result of adoption*. God is regarded as a Father, worthy of reverence and love. Before, his fear was the dread of a slave; now it is a filial fear, working by love. Rom. 8 : 14, 15. That love has pardoned him, etc.

3. It is manifested by *hatred to that which is hateful to God*. Sin in all its ramifications. Intemperance—falsehood—injustice—evil association—all the works of the flesh. Gal. 5 : 16–21.

4. Manifested also by *delighting in that which is pleasing to God*. —The fruits of the Spirit. Gal. 5 : 22, 23. Delight in his house — in his people — in his service, etc. .

5. *Submission to his will in every state*. It is revealed in his word—it is manifested in his appointments. As to doctrines, ordinances, and precepts, I do not follow my own mind. — In afflictions, I do not resist or repine. “It is the Lord, let him do as seemeth good in his sight.”

II. THEIR HAPPINESS: “It shall be well with them.”

1. *It is well with them already*. Are they not saved from guilt and condemnation? Are they not renewed—and adopted? Have they not hope? It is well with them. They “fear God,” and from that principle arises their happiness.

“Wisdom,” or the fear of the Lord, “is the principal thing;” “the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver,” — Prov. 3 : 18–18. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;” it is of heavenly origin; it comes down from the Father of lights, and prepares us for the enjoyment of him. It promotes our true interest, and confers upon us the highest honors, Neh. 7 : 2.

It produces a *good conscience*, — preserving us from crimes which would distress us. 2 Cor. 1 : 12; Heb. 10 : 22.

It inspires with *courage and fortitude*. Neh. 6 : 11. All less fears are swallowed by this great fear, the fear of God.

It prevents *compliance with sinful temptations, and criminal indulgences*. It stands as a sentinel over the soul and warns it of approaching dangers, and suppresses the first risings of corruption, before they issue in actual sins.

It leads to *associations and services* which yield unspeakable delight. “I was glad when they said to me.” — “I am a companion of all them that fear thee.” — “Then they that feared the Lord.” — Mal. 3 : 16. It leads to communion with God.

2. *It shall be well with them.*

They are under the conduct of Divine Providence. God appoints the bounds of their habitations.—

(1.) It shall be well with them in adversity. Isa. 43 : 2.

(2.) In the furnace of affliction. In their trials the wicked have no refuge; but the believer recognizes God in them, who says, “All things shall work together.” — Isa. 48 : 10.

(3.) *In death*. The retrospect of life will give no pain. “The righteous hath hope in his death.”

(4.) It will influence the resurrection. The fearers of God will be raised to immortal life. Rom. 8 : 11; Phil. 3 : 20, 21.

(5.) It will influence the judgment day. It shall be well with them then.

3. *It shall be well with them forever*. “Their sun shall no more go down.” —

III. THE CERTAINTY OF THEIR HAPPINESS. "Surely I know."

1. *I know from experience.* I never found happiness in sin—I have found it in the fear of God.

2. *I know it from observation.* I have watched the righteous and the wicked; I have seen them die. "The wicked is driven away."—"Mark the perfect man."—"Let me die the death of the righteous."—

3. *I know it from reason.* Holiness is bliss. Bliss here and hereafter.

4. *I know it from the promises.* The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. How abundant are they!

LIII.—FEARS DISPELLED.

"Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy one of Israel."—ISAIAH 41: 14.

VAST is the difference between God and man. God is so glorious that nothing human can fully represent his incomparable Being. "To whom shall we liken him," the High and Lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose "name is Holy." On the other hand, man is so fallen, wicked, polluted, and helpless, that the lowest and basest of things are adopted by the sacred writers to represent man's degradation. He is compared to earth, dust, the grass of the field, to a lie, to vanity, and here to a worm.—But, astonishing condescension! to this debased, wretched, and ruined being, Jehovah stoops from his high abode, to bless him with the joys of his salvation.

I. THE CHARACTER OF GOD'S PEOPLE.

1. The language refers to the Jews as the descendants of *Jacob*, afterwards called *Israel*, and his posterity, *Israelites*.

God's people are now called "Israelites in whom there is no guile." Like the children of Israel, they have been in bondage, a spiritual bondage worse than that of Egypt.—They have been *delivered* by One like unto Moses, even Christ, who atoned for them, pardoned and justified them, and who has graciously purposed to lead them through the wilderness of the world to a better inheritance than Canaan.

Like Jacob of old Christians are frequently *subjected to trials*—like him they pray and wrestle—like him they prevail; for praying breath shall not be spent in vain. Gen. 32; Ps. 34: 15.

2. *The Epithet* employed to designate their character. "Worm." "Fear not, thou worm Jacob."

This word is used to describe a person, mean, weak, vile, and despised, Job. 25: 5, 6.—In the text it is applied to the Jews in Babylon, as poor, oppressed, afflicted, and despised by their enemies. It indi-

cates their weakness, helplessness, and inability to deliver themselves. Hence Matthew Henry observes; "It is the worm Jacob; so little, so weak, and so defenceless, despised and trampled on by everybody, forced to creep even into the earth for safety; and we must not wonder that Jacob is become a worm, when even Jacob's King calls himself a worm and no man." Ps. 22 : 6. — This Epithet implies

(1.) *Meanness.* A worm is a creature of little worth; its residence is the ground; it hath no beauty in it. What is more contemptible than a worm? Man's origin as to his body is the dust. — In his fallen state, he is empty, having no good in him—lighter than vanity. Sin has degraded him, enervated his powers, alienated his heart from God.

This meanness is frequently felt by Christians. When they think of the grandeur and glory of God as seen in his works, and recorded in his word. Ps. 8 : 3, 4. The heavens with all their starry hosts are only the work of his "fingers." What then must be the works of his outstretched arm? These are not the displays, but rather "the hidings of his power." See Hab. 3 : 4-12.

When they think of their sins and imperfections. 1 Cor. 15 : 9.

When they think of their duties, trials — their ignorance — and their tendency to the grave.

(2.) *Pollution.* A worm is regarded as unclean. Its element is putrescence. Man is now degraded from his original dignity even below the brute creation; yea, he has debased himself even unto hell, Isa. 1 : 3; 57 : 9. Every Christian feels his tendency to pollution — feels himself to be a worm.

(3.) *Danger.* A worm is a creature frequently exposed to danger. Every foot is ready to crush it. — The body of man is liable to casualties — to death, sudden or protracted, from insignificant causes. And the precious soul of man is surrounded by danger. Sin, the world, sinful pleasures, and Satan, are ready to crush it.

(4.) *Weakness.* A worm is not able to make resistance, etc. — What resistance can a sinner make against God! Ah! he is only a worm. Isa. 45 : 9. What can a believer do against his enemies — in his trials and sorrows, etc., without Divine aid? Without it he feels himself a worm. 2 Cor. 12 : 7, 10.

II. GOD'S PEOPLE ARE SUBJECT TO FEAR. "Fear not, worm Jacob."

The Israelites in Babylon were sadly depressed in mind, fearing that their captivity was absolute — that God would be gracious no more.

The people of God are subject to fear.

1. Their character, as represented by the *meanness, pollution, danger, and weakness of the worm*, causes them to fear.

2. *They fear their enemies.* They have been despised. Regarded as contemptible as worms. Their name cast out as evil.

Satan is their grand adversary. Inward corruption their greatest plague.

3. They fear Divine chastisements. These are needful, but "grievous." Heb. 12 : 11.

4. They sometimes fear they will be finally lost.

5. They fear death. They regard him as the last enemy, and as the king of terrors. They are "subject to bondage." Heb. 2 : 15.

III. THE EXHORTATION AND PROMISE. "*Fear not, thou worm Jacob, I will help thee.*" I will assist you in your conscious feebleness, and will deliver you.

"Fear not!" Rise above thy fears—cast them away. Look from earthly resources to the mighty God of Jacob. Fear not thy foes. "He that is for thee is more than all that are against thee."—The gracious regard of God will be seen from the following considerations:—

1. I will help thee, for I *have chosen thee*. Worm as thou art—polluted as thou art, I have set my love on thee. I will therefore help my chosen. Ezek. 16 : 6, etc.

2. *I have redeemed thee*. Thou art a guilty polluted worm, ready to perish; but I commissioned my son to die for thee—he has shed his blood for thy sins. "If any man sin, we have an advocate."—I will, for his sake, forgive thee, and save thee, however vile.

3. *I have adopted thee*. I am thy Almighty Father. I know thy frame. I remember thou art but dust. I pity thee, I love thee. I will never leave thee, etc. Surely I will help my children.

4. *I will be with thee at all times*; so that thou shalt say, "I am not alone, but the Father is with me." Present with thee to preserve thee; "no evil shall befall thee."—Ps. 91 : 4–10.—With thee in afflictions and sorrows.

5. I will help thee with the *ministration of my angels*. Ps. 91 : 11; Heb. 1 : 14.

6. *I will guide and direct thee* in all thy perplexities.

7. *I will glorify thee*. Thou art a worm here—a poor crawling sinful creature—yet I will glorify thy soul—change thy vile body when the dead shall be raised.—Even as the chrysalis becomes a superior and more beautiful being after its temporary sleep; so shalt thou after thy sleep in the grave rise to bear the image of the heavenly.

Finally. The character of God is the guarantee for the accomplishment of his promise: "Saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel."

LIV.—IMPORTANCE OF EXEMPLARY PIETY.

“Walk in wisdom toward them that are without.”—Col. 4 : 5.

THE holy tendency of the Gospel is one of the principal evidences of its Divine origin. It not only brings salvation, but teaches and expects us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to be separate from the world.—Christians, by reason of the circumstances in which they are placed, and the numerous discouragements and temptations surrounding them, are liable to decline in spirituality, and sometimes to relapse into sin. Such declensions are prejudicial to the advancement of religion; while nothing so effectually promotes it as vigorous and exemplary piety; “walking in wisdom,” etc.

The words evidently imply,

I. *The peculiar nature of Christ's Church.* They who belong to it are distinguished from the world. “Walk in wisdom toward them that are without;” that is, act wisely and prudently before them who are without, who yet continue unbelieving Gentiles, or persecuting Jews.

The members of Christ's Church have been *separated from the world*; by the call of the Gospel and the influence of the Spirit.

They have believed in Christ to the saving of the soul. Acts 16 : 30, 31.

They have consecrated themselves to the service of Christ, and given themselves to the Church to enjoy the fellowship of the saints. 2 Cor. 8 : 5.

They are not “without” the Church, but within the sacred inclosure, of which Jehovah has said, Zech. 2 : 5. The Church is a vineyard—a garden—a house—an ark, etc. They are in it—all the wicked are without, walking in darkness, led captives by Satan.

2. The unregenerate, or *those who are without*, are *close inspectors of the conduct of* professors.

Men are not so ignorant as not to know what a Christian should be. They are accurate observers—they expect the portrait of Christianity to be fully delineated. They care little about our sentiments and experience, but their eye is fixed upon our conduct. We may hope that we are pardoned and justified, but they will judge whether we are sanctified or not.

A child knows when its parent is kind and tender, and a servant when his master is what he ought to be. Men in general know when a person's dealings are open and honorable, and when not.

3. When men of the world *observe the defections of professors*, they are sure to employ it as a weapon against the Gospel, to which they have a great aversion. The misconduct of one is an injury to the whole Church.

Such conduct brings reproach upon religion. Christ's name is blasphemed through them, Rom. 2 : 24. The carnal professors at Philippi were a great grief to Paul, Phil. 3 : 18. The Church of God is injured and defiled by the defalcations of professors, Heb. 12 : 15. Evil professors are like poisonous plants that spread their baleful influence around them, and whole communities have by their means been brought to desolation. Hos. 5 : 3. A little leaven will go on to leaven the whole lump. 1 Cor. 5 : 6-8; Gal. 5 : 9, 10.

4. That it is the duty of Christians, by their holy and prudent career, *to commend the religion of Christ to the admiration and homage of mankind.*

Exemplary piety has often produced a salutary conviction, when other means have failed. It has often proved more effectual than preaching. It must produce some good effect, 1 Pet. 3 : 1; Ac 13.

In order to walk in wisdom, etc., attend to the following directions:

(1.) Let your deportment be *distinct* from, and *elevated* above that of worldly men.——

In some cases, no line of distinction is visible. A professor appears no different from a carnal man. "What do ye more than others?"——While others are ignorant, show that you are intelligent—that you have been enlightened from above—that you are made wise unto salvation. While others are foolish, empty, and delighting in vanity, show that you are wise, and in pursuit of a more enduring substance. Despise the trifles of the world.

(2.) *Avoid worldly conformity.* Rom. 12 : 2.

Beware of the spirit of the world—its policy—its customs—its amusements, and pleasures. Many have been ruined by these. 1 Tim. 4 : 10; "Whosoever therefore will be."—James 4 : 4.

(3.) Be *honest and upright* in all your secular transactions, 1 Sam. 12 : 3; 2 Cor. 1 : 12.

When a carnal man suffers by the injustice of a professor of religion, the effect is disastrous. Imitate the conduct of the Apostles, 1 Thess. 2 : 10.

(4.) Let your *speech be chaste and serious.* Talk not like the wicked. Tit. 2 : 6-8.

Nature has suspended the power of speech in infants till reason begins to act, in order to teach us to think before we speak. But how often do we speak without thinking, and speak what we should not dare to utter, did we think at all.—Avoid foolish jesting. Eph. 5 : 4. "The tongue is a fire."—James 3 : 2-6.—"The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom."—Ps. 37 : 30, 31.

(5.) *Avoid evil association, and places of conviviality.* Say, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee."

It is an awful sign when a professor of religion feels no hesitancy in associating with carnal men, and visiting taverns, theatres, etc. Christ

says to all his true disciples, "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." 2 Cor. 6 : 17.

(6.) In the Church of Christ be *harmonious and peaceable*. This commends religion. Strifes and jars impede its progress.

(7.) Pay especial regard to *relative duties*.

A man is best known at home, and there his light must shine. If his domestic character will not bear examination, and there be no savor of godliness about it, no one will be the better for his religion. Hear the resolve of David, Ps. 101 : 1-3; Gen. 18 : 19; Josh. 24 : 15.

Lastly, pray to God for help. He can make you wise and prudent. He can elevate your mind above the vanities of earth. Pray to him. Trust in him.

LV.—THE LEADING OF THE SPIRIT AN EVIDENCE OF DIVINE SONSHIP.

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."—Rom. 8 : 14.

To be a child of God, an heir of God, and joint-heir with Jesus Christ, is a privilege the greatness and blessedness of which no human tongue can describe.——Nothing is of more consequence to us than to ascertain our state before God, in prospect of eternity. [This chapter, and especially the text and immediate verses, furnish sufficient tests by which to ascertain our character. Take verse 13; "If ye live after," etc.—or the text, "As many as are led," etc. Do we live after the flesh? Do we through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body? Are we led by the Spirit of God?—Life and death are suspended on these questions. Spiritual death here, perdition hereafter;—Divine sonship here, an eternal inheritance hereafter, are matters to which we may know our relation by the answers which we are able to give to these questions.]

I. THE CHARACTER OF GOD'S PEOPLE: they are "*led by the Spirit*."

1. It is the office of the Spirit to *lead, guide, and instruct in the way of salvation*.

"As many as are led by the Spirit of God." This is distinctly stated by Christ, John 16 : 7, 10. His sufficiency he represents as complete, John 14 : 26. Hence he is called the Spirit of Truth. John 14 : 17; 1 Cor. 2 : 10, 11.

The Spirit is the third Person in the ever-blessed Trinity, and of course invested with all the attributes of Deity:—infinitely wise, powerful, good, etc., and therefore his guidance and teaching will be perfect.

2. The Spirit leads the sinner to a *perception of his lost and ruined condition*. "He shall convince the world of sin."

The methods of the Divine operation to convince of sin are various. Sometimes by meditation upon some solemn subject—by personal affliction and approximation to death—by the death of some acquaintance or friend—by the prayers of Christians—by some sermon; some of these may be powerfully applied to the soul by the Spirit. By such influence, Christ apprehends, lays hold on the soul, stops it in its impenitent progress, and causes it to “hear his voice.” The solemnities of death and judgment are forcibly presented to the attention; judgment appears nearly to commence, and the awful scenes of eternity appear near; the careless sinner is awakened to perceive his guilt and danger, and compelled to cry out, “What must I do to be saved?” As when the earthquake, and the opening of the prison-doors, accompanied with unspeakable terrors, impressed the obdurate mind of the jailer, and made him fall down at the feet of his prisoners, trembling and amazed. Of the three thousand at the day of Pentecost, we read, “that they were pricked in their heart.” Others, like the Ethiopian eunuch, and Lydia, are wrought upon in a more gentle manner—drawn with “the cords of love, and the ties of a man.” All this is the leading of the Spirit.

3. The Spirit *leads to contrition*; according to the promise, Zech. 12: 10. Sin now appears to the mind, as delineated there by the Spirit, in all its hateful qualities and effects; as that which has offended God, which condemns, curses, and defiles the soul; which separates from God, and consigns to the blackness of darkness forever. The Spirit leads to “Godly sorrow, which worketh repentance unto salvation,” etc., Matt. 5: 4.

4. The Spirit leads the sinner to a *discovery of Christ as the Saviour*. “Howbeit when the Spirit of Truth is come,” etc. John 16: 13, 14.—“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” John 12: 32.

No radical or saving change is effected without the exhibition of this object; nor are the terrors of the law alone ever sufficient for this purpose; they are sufficient to show the heinousness of sin, and the great danger to which the sinner is exposed, but cannot produce a complete renovation. “By the law is the knowledge of sin.” The law will discover our disease, but the knowledge of Christ is a discovery of the remedy. The law denounces its awful sentence; the discovery of Christ points out the method of escape. The law at most is but a “schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.” All saving influence and solid consolation springs from him, and from him alone. “The law kills,” as the ministration of condemnation; it is “Christ who makes alive.”

The revelation of Christ is in the Scriptures; but in conversion the Spirit removes “the veil on the heart,” dispels prejudice, and affords that inward and Divine light by which alone Christ is discerned for saving purposes. “It pleased God to reveal his Son in me.” Gal. 1: 16.

The minds of men, before renovation, resemble an apartment, shut up and inclosed with something that is not transparent; the light shines around with much splendor, but the apartment remains dark, because its entrance is obstructed. Unbelief, love of the world, and of

sin, pride, and prejudice, form the obstructions in question. "The light shined in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not." Paul was in this state before his conversion. His prejudices against the Gospel were inveterate: his hatred violent and active; but no sooner was Christ revealed in him than all was changed. The Spirit reveals to the sinner,

(1.) *The greatness and dignity of Christ.* Sinners have very mean thoughts of Christ. They esteem him as "a root out of a dry ground." Paul had the most contemptible thoughts of Christ before his conversion. But after that these mistaken views were corrected. See 2 Cor. 3: 16-18. Then he confessed his divinity, and was enraptured with his glory. An interest in him appeared supremely valuable, his approbation supremely desirable. The knowledge of Christ was accounted by him as the most excellent knowledge.

(2.) *The power of Christ to save to the uttermost.* The Spirit reveals Christ as the end of the law for righteousness, etc. As the great atonement—as the Mediator—the fitness of his vicarious sufferings and death to our situation—the richness and perfection of the provision which there is in Christ for our ruined souls. He reveals him as our "Wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."

5. Consequently the Spirit leads the sinner to the *exercise of faith in Christ that he may be saved.* Feeling his state of guilt and ruin; being convinced of Christ's ability and willingness to save him, the Spirit further inclines him to venture his soul upon him and upon him alone.

He is led by the Spirit to cast away his doubts and fears arising from his vileness and unworthiness. — He "believes in the Lord Jesus Christ and is saved." — Faith in Christ as the great Prophet, the Light of the world, saves him from spiritual darkness, and enlightens his mind; faith in him as the great High-priest, delivers him from guilt and pollution; faith in him as his King, subjugates his heart and fills it with the love of Christ.

6. *The Spirit renovates the mind*—deadens the soul to sin; and disposes it to holy obedience and love. John 3: 3, 5; Tit. 3: 4, 5.

II. THE PRIVILEGE OF GOD'S PEOPLE: "They are the Sons of God."

Adoption into the family of God is a glorious privilege. It is the result of the Spirit's influence. He has operated on their souls to bring them to Christ, and into God's family. None have a right to Divine Sonship, except led by the Spirit.

They are the sons of God because they have complied with the prerequisites of adoption—have been enlightened—have repented—have believed with their hearts unto righteousness—have united with God's people—and are renewed in the spirit of their minds.

Adoption is not a mere relation; the *privilege* and the *image* of the sons of God go together. A state of adoption is never without a separation from defilement. 2 Cor. 6: 17, 18. The new name in adoption is never given till the new creature is formed. Regeneration as a *physical* act, gives us a likeness to God in our nature; adoption as a *legal*

act, gives us a right to an inheritance! Regeneration makes us *formally* his sons by conveying a principle, 1 Pet. 1 : 23 ; adoption makes us *relatively* his sons by conveying a power, John 1 : 12. By the one we are instated in the Divine affection ; by the other we are partakers of the Divine nature.

The *privileges of adoption* are many and great. Consider,

1. The *names* by which they are distinguished, so expressive of their elevation and dignity. Once they were called strangers, etc. See Eph. 2 : 19, 20. They were *enemies*, but being now reconciled to God by faith in Christ, they are become the "sons and children of God." They are not only a "chosen generation," but a "royal priesthood," and hence become "kings and priests unto God." And however unworthy they feel themselves, yet, "this honor have all the saints."

2. "The *liberty* wherewith Christ has made them free." They were under the guilt and dominion of sin, the tyranny of Satan, the curse of the law, and consequently the sting of death. But they are delivered from all these. "If the Son," etc.

3. *Inexhaustible provision and riches.* All the blessings of a temporal kind that are for their good shall be given them, Ps. 84 : 11. All the blessings of grace are treasured up in Christ for them, Eph. 1 : 3. "All things are yours." 1 Cor. 3 : 21, 22.

4. Paternal care and protection, Prov. 14 : 26. As an earthly parent defends the members of his family, so Christ is engaged to protect and defend his people, Isa. 32 : 18 ; Heb. 1 : 14.

5. Free, certain, and delightful access to God as their Father, Rom. 5 : 2 ; Eph. 3 : 12. His children may come "boldly to the throne of grace," and God will hear their cries. 1 John 5 : 14, 15.

6. *A title to the everlasting inheritance.* Gal. 3 : 29. Frequently called "heirs," Rom. 8 : 17 ; 1 John 3 : 1, 2.

III. THE PEOPLE OF GOD CHERISH AND ENJOY THE INFLUENCE OF THE SPIRIT, AND THEREBY EVIDENCE THAT THEY ARE THE SONS OF GOD.

By the Spirit sinners are not merely led to become the children of God, but led by the Spirit till they come into the measure, etc., Eph. 4 : 13.

1. They are sensible of their ignorance and weakness, and recognize the enlightening and strengthening energy of the Spirit. Eph. 3 : 16.

2. They are careful not to "quench" or "grieve" the Holy Spirit, 1 Thess. 5 : 19 ; Eph. 4 : 30.

3. They frequently *petition for that influence.* Ps. 50 : 11. The Spirit has been promised, Gal. 3 : 14.

4. In the *discharge of their duties* they are ever anxious to have the *aid of the Spirit.* Rom. 8 : 26 ; Acts 2 : 4.

5. They have the *inward witness of the Spirit*, Rom. 8 : 16, and the external manifestation of the "fruits of the Spirit," Gal. 5 : 22. This is to resemble God.

APPLICATION.

1. Mark the amazing love of God displayed in the privilege of adoption. 1 John 3 : 1.

2. From the text, learn your own character and experience. If led by your lusts, your own inclinations, by the spirit and example of the world, you are the children of Satan, etc.

LVI.—CONSOLATION IN THE REDEEMER.

“Consolation in Christ.”—PHIL. 2 : 1.

THE Gospel is admirably adapted to the state of man as a guilty sinner—as a believer in Christ—and as a candidate for eternity. Infinite wisdom contrived it—Almighty love carried it into effect.—All the attempts of man to obtain consolation suitable to his state and character have proved abortive.—Mere morality—self-righteousness—hope of justification by the works of the law, are vain, Rom. 8 : 3; 1 Cor. 3 : 11; Phil. 3 : 7.

I. THERE IS CONSOLATION IN CHRIST.

Consolation implies that inward spiritual refreshing of the soul produced by the love of God shed abroad in the heart by means of the enlightening and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. John 16 : 7.

Christ is called “the consolation of Israel,” Luke 2 : 25. He is represented as the *source* of consolation, 2 Cor. 1 : 5. He is the *giver* of consolation, 2 Thess. 2 : 16. Those who *repose* upon him for salvation, have *strong consolation*, Heb. 6 : 18.

This consolation was provided by the infinite beneficence of the Deity. This is the source of it all. He commiserated man in his fallen and ruined state.

He devised and promulgated by his prophets the plan of mercy to a ruined world. Christ is therefore styled, “the mercy promised to the fathers.” This gladdened the Church in former ages as they looked through the types to the great Antitype—through the shadows to the substance—through the sacrifices to the great One Sacrifice. It consoled Adam, Gen. 3 : 15. It consoled Abel, Heb. 11 : 4. It consoled Abraham, John 8 : 56; Heb. 11 : 17. It consoled Moses, Heb. 11 : 24–26. It consoled all the prophets, 1 Pet. 1 : 10–12. And Christ will console till time shall be no more. “Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world.”

There is consolation,

1. *In his delegation to this world as the Saviour of sinners.* The entrance of a conqueror into a city, after some decisive battle, causes joy.—The visit of a monarch to some part of his domain

creates unwonted sensation, etc. But when Christ came to earth to die, it astonished heaven, angels, men, and devils.—He came not to curse, but to bless—not to destroy, but to save. He disrobed himself of his vestments of essential glory and omnipotence, and came on the wings of infinite mercy.—How consolatory was this! “Rejoice greatly”—Zech. 9 : 9; Isa. 32 : 1, 2; 42 : 1-4. Hence the declaration of the angel, Luke 2 : 9-11, 13, 14. Consolation,

2. *In his pre-eminent qualification for the office.*

(1.) *He is Divine.* Styled “Wonderful,” etc. Isa. 9 : 6. He is God, John 1 : 1-3. Equal with the Father, Phil. 2 : 6. Blessed truth! My Saviour is Divine. A mere creature like myself could not have become my Saviour.

(2.) *He became man.* John 1 : 14; Gal. 4 : 4. Blessed truth! My Saviour became man. An angel could not have saved me. But he appeared in my nature that he might suffer and die for me—that he might feel for me, and console me.

(3.) *He was perfectly holy and righteous.* He conformed to the law—he obeyed all its precepts. “Such an High Priest became us,” Heb. 7 : 26.—There is consolation,

3. *In his atonement.* He went to the cross and died to atone for man’s guilt. There he appeared as the Saviour—the Redeemer—the Ransomer—the Deliverer, etc. There is consolation in his Suretyship—in his substitution for me. “He bare my sins in his own body on the tree,”—that atonement was complete—it was accepted. To God it was a “sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savor.” Eph. 5 : 2.

4. *In his resurrection.* This confirmed the reality of his Messiahship, and the efficacy of his death, Rom. 1 : 4.—It was the pledge of my glorious resurrection, Rom. 8 : 11.

5. *In his intercession.* He has taken my nature with him into heaven. There he pleads for me. Heb. 7 : 25.

6. *In the influences of his Spirit.* These enlighten, quicken, comfort, cheer, seal, and witness.

It is evident, then, that this consolation is *rich and abundant*—*never-failing in its efficacy*—*free and gratuitous*—and *everlasting*. O blessed consolation!

II. THIS CONSOLATION IS NECESSARY.

What would life in this world be without consolation and hope! Even that consolation which comes from human sources may for a time be valuable. But it will ultimately fail—money will flee away—health will decay—friends will die, etc. We need better consolation than earth can furnish.—It is consolation for the deathless spirit—consolation that has an aspect on an invisible and eternal state.—It is necessary,

1. *In the time of conviction of spiritual destitution.* When the soul feels the need of salvation—when sin appears dreadful—and the soul feels hell-deserving. Acts 2 : 37.

2. In the *time of self-distrust*. Helplessness. Luke 15 : 17. Righteousness but as filthy rags. No succor from the law. Then its curse alarms.

3. In the *time of conflict*. With the flesh, the world — Satan. There are “fiery trials.” 2 Cor. 12 : 9.

4. In the *time of adversity and affliction*.

5. In *doubt and despondency*.

6. In the *prospect of death and eternity*. Christ is the conqueror of death. Will be with his people in the last conflict, and make them more than conquerors.

III. THIS CONSOLATION MAY BE OBTAINED.

By those who feel their need of it, and anxiously desire it.

Go where it is dispensed. In the word of God. In his house. In his ordinances. At his throne of grace. Pray, fervently petition for this consolation.

Believe. Consolation is obtained by faith. Wait for it. Expect it. Rest not till you have obtained it.

It is the pleasure of Christ to give it. “I will not leave you comfortless.” John 14 : 18, 27.

LVII. — CHRIST A ROCK.

A METAPHORICAL SKETCH.

“And that rock was Christ.”—1 Cor. 10 : 4.

CHRIST is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. How numerous and delightful are his excellencies as the Redeemer of men! To represent them, the sacred writers have adopted the choicest and most expressive figures which human language can furnish. Such figures are calculated to assist our understanding, to impress our memory, and to constrain our love. Hence he is called the Sun of Righteousness—the Bright and the Morning Star—the Manna and Living Bread—the Refiner—the Light of the World—the City of Refuge—the Living Stone, the Foundation, or Rock. To this last figure Christ is compared in the text. The rock of Horeb was a type of Christ. See Ex. 17 : 5, 6. — Observe,

I. A Rock is distinguished for firmness and stability. Hence rock makes the firmest foundation. It is the emblem of strength. “I will liken him,” Matt. 7 : 24; Luke 6 : 47. When the storm comes, the violence of the wind, the roaring torrent, etc., affect not a structure founded on a rock.

Jesus Christ is a firm foundation. Matt. 16 : 18. He is a sure foundation. Isa. 28 : 16. The power of Satan, the influence of error,

the scoffs of infidelity, may be defied by him who rests upon Christ, the Rock of ages. Rom. 8 : 31, etc.

II. Some rocks are distinguished for elevation. Though their base may be low in the ground, yet their tops surmount surrounding objects, and have a lofty and commanding prominence.

Christ our rock is high in the dignity of his person — high in his exaltation. Phil. 2 : 9-11. "In all things he has the pre-eminence." He is higher than angels, King of kings, and Lord of lords. He has absolute dominion over worlds visible and invisible. Col. 1 : 17, 18.

III. Rocks in ancient times were used for habitations. People dwelt in them, as well as built upon them. They hewed out houses in rocks. Isa. 22 : 16 ; Jer. 48 : 28.

God in Christ is a believer's spiritual habitation. Like the dove he dwells in the cleft of the rock. Ps. 90 : 1 ; 91 : 9. "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God." 1 John 4 : 16.

IV. Rocks were used for refuge and defence. This was the case when pursued by enemies. 1 Sam. 13 : 6. They were secure from the missiles of their enemies.

God in Christ is the refuge and defence of his people. Heb. 6 : 18. Thus the Psalmist triumphed, Ps. 46. Christ is the defence of his Church. Isa. 4 : 5. His gracious presence shall never be wanting. See Ps. 27 : 5 ; 143 : 9.

V. Rocks in oriental countries yield honey. See Ps. 81 : 16 ; Deut. 32 : 13.

All sweet peace and precious comfort proceed from the Rock Christ. 2 Pet. 1 : 4. His promises are sweeter than honey or the honeycomb. Ps. 19 : 10.

VI. Rocks yield the purest water. Exhilarating springs proceed from them. No water is so clear as that which comes in crystal streams from the rock. Hence Moses was commanded to smite the rock. Ex. 17 : 5, 6.

Christ the Rock was smitten by Divine Justice for sinners. "Smitten of God and afflicted." The curse of the law subjected him to the ignominious cross, and the Divine wrath. "He was wounded for our transgressions."——From that smitten Rock proceeded Divine refreshing streams of pardon, justification, etc. Hence Gospel blessings are thus predicted, Isa. 41 : 17, 18 ; and Christ said, John 7 : 37-39 ; Isa. 55 : 1. When Moses smote the rock, the water flowed abundantly. So when Christ was smitten, Rev. 22 : 17.

The water that flowed from the Rock in Horeb, was not only sufficient for their wants at that particular time, but it followed them in the way for some considerable time after the rock was smitten.——Christ imparted the blessed fruits of his death not only to the first ages of Christianity, but to the most distant ages of the world. Those streams of grace shall never cease to follow his Church, till mortality shall be swallowed up of life, till the wilderness be exchanged for the Canaan above.

VII. Rocks afford a very delightful and refreshing shadow in hot countries to weary travellers.

So Christ is as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, Isa. 4 : 6 ; 25 : 4 ; 32 : 2. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate," etc. Here the accusations of conscience, the charges of the law, etc., are silenced. Here we hide from the wrath of God.

VIII. Rocks are very durable and lasting. They are difficult to remove. It takes a long time to impair them. They continue from one generation to another.

The Lord Jesus has the stability of a rock in him. He is *the Rock of Ages*, the same yesterday, etc. He grows not weak — the riches of his grace will never be impoverished. Mark his immutability, "And, thou, Lord," etc. Heb. 1 : 10.

Lastly. Rocks, by their altitude, afford a good and delightful prospect of the distant country. From them objects afar off may be seen. See Num. 23 : 9.

He that by faith ascends to the top of this spiritual Rock, may take a better prospect and survey of heaven than Moses could of Canaan, when he stood upon the rock of Pisgah. The Christian rests upon the Rock Christ, and "looks for that blessed hope," etc. "He sees the king in his beauty, and the land that is afar off."

APPLICATION.

1st. Are you upon this Rock ?

2d. Let the firmness and durability of this Rock be an antidote to all fear.

3d. Take heed Christ be not unto you a Stumbling-stone and Rock of Offence.

LVIII.—CHRISTIANS A BLESSING TO THE WORLD.

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he that winneth souls is wise." — Prov. 11 : 30.

RELIGION is not a mere name, but the source of joy and pleasure here, and endless life hereafter. It is not mere formality ; it is life and activity in promoting the happiness of our species. If there be no good works adorning the life, then the profession is like a dead tree, etc. It is natural to a Christian to do good. — Then he resembles a tree of life, beautiful, verdant, and full of fruit in its season. — The character of Christ himself is illustrated by similar imagery, Rev. 2 : 7.

I. THE CHARACTER SPOKEN OF. "The righteous."

1st. Not those who pretend to be so, and wish to be esteemed as

such. This was the case with the Pharisees, who loved the praise of men—appeared unto men to fast—sounded the trumpet—prayed at the corner of the streets that they might be seen by persons coming two ways. These Christ denounced as hypocrites.

2d. Not those who are only *professionally* zealous and active, It is very possible to adopt a system, to espouse even the cause of Christ, and to make sacrifices to promote its advancement, and yet the soul be not righteous.

3d. Those who are righteous are made so by Christ. He pardons them. He justifies them. They are free from all charges of guilt, and no longer liable to condemnation. He that is uncharged with sin must be righteous.

4th. By his Spirit he has regenerated them and given them the principle of righteousness. The soul is renewed—diverted from sin, and disposed to holiness. It is righteousness of heart. The fountain of action is made good.

5th. It implies practical righteousness. A regard to honesty—to uprightness—to truth—to a holy walk and example before men. 1 John 3 : 7. ——— The Christian trusts in Christ alone for salvation : but these external fruits of holiness are necessary to show that his trust is genuine.

II. THE RIGHTEOUS BEAR GOOD FRUIT.

1st. None but the righteous can bear good fruit. The tree is made good. See John 15 : 4, etc. ; Matt. 7 : 17–20.

2d. Christians are influenced by the example of Christ. His life and his death were a tree of life. He pitied the wretched and guilty—he relieved the destitute. He lived and died for us. Look at that cross ! There is the tree of life, whose leaves, etc. Rev. 22 : 2.

3d. Christians are solicitous for the salvation of men. They think of their state as sinners—their exposure to everlasting ruin—they think of the value of their souls. ——— All awakens the most intense solicitude. Rom. 10 : 1. They are restless for souls.

4th. They labor to win souls to God by personal entreaty. They sound an alarm of danger to their fellows. They cry, Escape for thy life ! — Alas ! how little is done to save men by personal entreaty ! You can advise your fellow-man as to his secular difficulties—but when his soul is in danger you have not courage to utter one warning.

5th. *The employment of talent.* Some can instruct the young—some can pray with the sick—some can preach—some have much time at command—and some have worldly substance. In all “the fruit of the righteous is a tree of life.”

6th. *Spiritual and seasonable counsel.* Some are capable of advising in difficulty—in despondency—under temptations and afflictions—some can console the dying.

7th. An exemplary life is commanding and influential. Scoffers,

infidels, and persecutors have been awed and subdued by the embodiment of Christianity in the life and conduct.

Lastly. Prayer attends all. The private Christian—the minister of God feels that all his efforts are nothing without the Divine blessing.

III. CONTEMPLATE THE GRAND RESULT OF CHRISTIANITY. “He that winneth souls is wise.”

1st. He is made wise unto salvation to win souls.

2d. In winning souls he acts wisely. As a proof of it,

(1.) He recognizes his own responsibility. He labors to save others. and whether he succeeds or not, he clears his own soul.

(2.) Think of the immense good he confers upon others. “Saves a soul from death.”

(3.) These attempts to save others will give him satisfaction when he comes to die.

(4.) The grand result of Christian exertion will be signally apparent at the last day.

Lastly. Christian activity will influence eternity.

LIX.—THE ONLY FOUNDATION.

“For other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” — 1 COR. 3 : 11.

A FOUNDATION is the groundwork or lowest part of a building, which supports the other parts; as the foundation of a house, of a castle, of a fort, tower, etc. Christ is called a foundation, Isa. 28 : 16. On him, as the foundation, the Church is built. That is, the members of the Church depend upon his saving grace, his atonement, resurrection, and intercession, for acceptance with God. By his Spirit and Word, the materials, that is, converted and believing persons, are collected together; they rest upon him, and are a holy temple unto the Lord. See 1 Pet. 2 : 4-6; Eph. 2 : 19-22. In the preceding verses the Apostle denounces undue partiality to ministers, who are to be recognized as mere instruments. Christ alone is worthy of supreme exalted attachment, as he is the only basis of all spiritual and eternal happiness. He has become for his Church that which neither men nor angels could ever have done. “For other,” etc.

I. THE NECESSITY OF THIS FOUNDATION. Necessary, —

1. Because *man is a sinner*. A transgressor, lost and hopeless. His heart is impure. God is against him. Divine justice condemns him.

2. *He is helpless*. “Without strength,” Rom. 5 : 6. Totally incapable of removing or avoiding the awful penalty.

His state, therefore, was helpless, and Jesus, the Mighty One, appeared as his Saviour, when he was *without strength*. Could man perfectly conform to the law? Could he endure its curse? Blessed Saviour! thou alone wast able to save. Glorious announcement to the universe! "Lo! I come," etc.

II. THE PROPERTIES OF THIS FOUNDATION.

1. *Its origin is divine.* Planned by Jehovah. Consecrated to the great purpose of redemption by him. "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone," etc. I consecrate and lay this rock as a foundation.

Behold the infinite compassion of God. He looked down upon earth; no Saviour was to be found there; all had corrupted their way. He looked upon the angels and seraphs surrounding him, but they were *created* intelligences. Man required a Godlike salvation—infinite and eternal. "He took not on him the nature of angels."—He delegated and appointed his Son for this purpose. He knew what was wanted to vindicate the honor of his throne, to exhibit the purity of his law, and to display the riches of his sovereign grace. "Then he is gracious," etc. Job 33 : 24; Ps. 89 : 19.

2. A foundation is *laid low in the ground* to render it firm and secure. So Christ, the only foundation, was laid very low, that he might meet our necessities. He stooped from heaven to earth. He bowed the heavens and came down. He was "in the form of God," etc. Phil. 2 : 6.

There were several steps of his humiliation:—

(1.) *The assumption of human nature.* He became a worm, and no man, despised of the people. This was a great step downward. The "image of the invisible God, and the First-born of all creatures" clothed in clay.

(2.) *Conformity to the law.* "Made under the law." Gal. 4 : 4. Placed under its restraints; made obedient to its ceremonies and observances. Hence he was circumcised; presented in the temple; redeemed and ransomed with two turtles; bound to go up to all the feasts.

(3.) *Subjected to great trial and conflict.* Born in poverty; lived in poverty. "Foxes had holes." Incessantly reviled and persecuted; the contradiction of sinners; his character traduced, etc.; the hand of violence was lifted up against him. He was spurned and trampled upon.

(4.) *Subjection to penal sufferings and death.* Think of that bloody agony. So intense that it brought angels down from heaven to strengthen him. Look at that scourging; listen to those taunts and revilings. Mark those lacerations. Hear the driving of those nails, and then the uproarious shouts of derision, etc. etc. And this was the Lord of life and glory. How low he stooped!

(5.) *Consignment to the grave*—the place of corruption. When he was buried, he was like other foundations, laid under ground. This and his consequent resurrection, were necessary, proving the reality of his death and atonement. See the argument, 1 Cor. 15 : 1.

3. A foundation must have *strength and stability*, in order to support the superstructure. Christ is called a *Stone*. A stone is the most suitable material for a foundation. Christ is a stone, a rock. Isa. 28 : 16 ; 1 Cor. 10 : 4. An immovable Rock. All who build upon him are rendered secure and strong. Isa. 45 : 24 ; Eph. 6 : 10 ; John 15 : 5.

4. Christ is a *precious foundation*.

Though all stones may be useful in their place, yet they are not all precious stones. The topaz, the emerald, the diamond, will not be selected as foundation-stones. But Christ is more precious than rubies. A foundation-stone *elect and precious*. 1 Pet. 2 : 6. The most precious stone in the universe. "The chief among ten thousand," etc. Saints say of him, "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" "Unto you who believe, he is precious." 1 Pet. 2 : 7. To sinners, he is a stone of stumbling, etc.

5. Christ is a *tried foundation*. "A tried stone;" completely adapted to all the sublime and gracious purposes for which it was laid.

God tried him by laying upon him all our guilt. Men and devils tried him by their sophistry, persecutions, and temptations, but he repulsed them. Divine justice tried him, and he answered all his demands. Saints have tried him, and found him not only to answer, but to exceed their expectations. Ask the blood-bought throng before the throne as to the result of their trying him.

6. Christ is an *everlasting foundation*. "His name shall endure forever." Ps. 72 : 17.

Other foundations may be razed to the ground; earthquakes may destroy them, and time will be sure to decay them. The foundations of kingdoms, nations, empires, etc., may be convulsed and destroyed, but against this rock the gates of hell shall never prevail. — Error cannot destroy it. The sophistry, infidelity, and bitter hostility of man, cannot undermine this foundation. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday," etc. It is "a *sure foundation*. He that believeth shall not make haste," or be driven to and fro in confusion, never be ashamed, never be confounded; for he shall be safe, he shall feel himself safe in the darkest opposition, in the struggles of death, and the terrors of judgment.

III. THAT IT IS THE DUTY AND PRIVILEGE OF BELIEVERS TO BUILD, OR REST UPON THIS FOUNDATION. This implies,—

1. *Credence*. A belief that he is appointed of God to be the foundation—the Saviour. His claims are acknowledged. His right is indisputable.

2. A conviction that this foundation is necessary—necessary for us. That Christ is as necessary to the salvation of our souls, as the foundation-stone is to the erection of any building. Must feel our need of it.

3. The abandonment of all other grounds of trust.

4. Dependence upon him. Even as a stone is placed upon the

foundation, so must we place our souls upon Christ the Rock. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," etc. Look to him for pardon and justification. Build upon him alone.

5. Be careful what you build upon this foundation. Do not build error upon it,—your own favorite notions; human creeds, ordinances and opinions, loose and careless walking, etc. This will be but wood, hay, stubble, instead of gold, silver, and precious stones.

LX.—NUMBERING OUR DAYS.

"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." — Ps. 90 : 12.

WHAT is man? A sinner, frail and dying. This is solemnly taught in this Psalm. Who can read it without being deeply humbled, and affected? Who can read it aright without praying, "So teach us." —

I. THE OBJECT OF THE PRAYER. "Numbering our days." To number means to reckon, to count, to calculate. Observe, —

1. We are very apt to forget the nature of human life. It is a vapor—like grass, etc. etc. It is frail and short, and yet we talk and act as if we were never to die. The mind is fully absorbed by the world, etc., while "our breath is in our nostrils."

2. That we take a *retrospective view* of our life. A great portion of it spent in folly. How little to God—how much to Satan!

3. That we number or calculate *prospectively*. The remnant of our life will *rapidly* pass away.—That remnant will be *short*. —What a little time we have to live! —That the time of life's termination is *uncertain*. "In such an hour," etc.

Number our days! Calculate according to your natural strength—the nature of your constitution. According to bodily indications. Perhaps the outward man begins to perish, and you feel it.

Take into consideration also the numerous apparent casualties, etc., by which life is terminated.

Number your days according to the utmost limit of life. "Three-score years and ten." What a few days have you to live!

4. That the small remnant of our life is the only portion allotted to us for performing the will of God. A great work to do in a very short time.

II. The End for which we must number our days. "That we may apply," etc.

We have been foolish. It is high time to awake, and put away childish things "The day is far spent," etc.

1. That we may repent of our sins—our loss of time—and abuse of mercy.

2. That we may seek, obtain, and enjoy the salvation of Christ.
 "Wise unto salvation."

3. That we may consecrate ourselves to the service of Christ, and the Divine glory. "Blessed are those servants." Luke 12 : 37.

4. That we cherish a growing faith in Christ, and the hope of immortality.

5. That we live in constant expectation of death.

This is true wisdom. We properly estimate life — we enjoy it; the mercy of God sweetens it—we are prepared for uncertainties—we gain substance, and not shadows — secure heaven, and escape perdition — the vanities of earth followed by the sublime realities of eternity.

III. We need God to teach us, and must pray for it. God is willing to teach us, and none else can.

Pray for a *disposition* to number our days.

Pray for help in the use of those means designed to prepare us for death.

Pray for victory over sin — the world — the creature, and every object of extreme attachment.

Pray for strong faith in Christ, and of a bright hope of heaven, to enable us to conquer the fear of death, that we may not regard it with terror, but as the messenger of Christ to fetch us home to him.

LXL.—THE GOSPEL FEAST.

"In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people, a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees; of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." — ISA. 25 : 6.

RICH and magnificent are the feasts of kings. Their vessels of silver and gold — their costly viands and delicious wines — their numerous guests in splendid, costly, and imposing attire, affect the imagination and excite wonder. — But there has never been any royal feast worthy to be compared with the Gospel feast. Consider its rich dainties — its exhilarating wine and spiritual drinks for the thirsty soul — consider the Master of the feast as the Lord of the universe, the exalted second person in the Godhead, King of kings, etc. — consider that this feast is but the precursor of a richer, more joyful, more social, and everlasting feast in heaven — consider these things, and then see that no feast like this was ever provided by human hands.

I. *This feast is greatly needed.* By famishing sinners—ready to perish. Does a man ready to die from hunger need food? The *necessities* of thy soul, sinner, are greater and more urgent. Thou

art under the wrath of God, etc. etc., and there is but a step between thee and the grave. [Amplify.]

II. *This feast has been provided by the Lord of hosts.* Lord of angels — of men — of fallen spirits; Creator, Governor, and Ruler of all. O astonishing condescension and love! It was love, infinite love, that provided this feast. John 3 : 16.

III. *This feast was provided at a great expense.* What did the sinner require? Righteousness of state, of heart, and life. Acceptance with an offended God; pardon, peace, and joy.

To procure these invaluable blessings gold and silver are but as dust — houses and lands, and the domains of kings, are utterly worthless. "Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts of the field for a burnt-offering." "The gold of Sheba, the fine linen of Egypt, the topaz of Ethiopia," and the most costly things of earth, could not have provided the dainties of this feast. This provision involved the humiliation — the sufferings — the death of Christ. 2 Cor. 8 : 9; 1 Pet. 1 : 18; Rom. 8 : 32.

IV. *Great variety and rich abundance.* He has abundantly provided the *bread of life*, a "feast of fat things, a feast of wines" — the wine of the kingdom — the water of life springing up into everlasting life.

Now look at the varieties of this feast: —

1. There you see the *glory of God* displayed in the most transcendent manner.

His natural perfections are manifest in his works, but it is chiefly in the great system of redemption that his moral perfections are displayed. Here the love, the grace, the compassion of God to man appears. It is here that he pours forth all his fulness, and unveils the brightness of his throne, Tit. 3 : 5-7; 1 John 3 : 1. Every attribute was *glorified* in Christ. Wisdom, by the contrivance of the plan of salvation; power, by its accomplishment; justice, by the satisfaction of all its demands; holiness, by the vindication of all its spotless prerogatives; mercy, by full salvation to ruined man; and truth, by the completion of all the purposes and promises of God. "A feast of fat things," etc.

2. There we find and experience *those truths and blessings in which we have the deepest interest*. There is an incomparable sweetness in the doctrines of the Gospel. Delicious honey! the nectar of flowers is bitter compared with their sweetness.

See at this feast the doctrines of Divine grace. — My state as a sinner was known, was pitied, was provided for, before the foundation of the world. Christ was, for me, the Lamb slain from, etc. See there the doctrine of forgiveness and acceptance through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. Sweet is the doctrine of justification — of adoption and all its privileges. See there the doctrine of sanctification, the progressive purification of the soul, effected by the agency of the ever-blessed Spirit. Then think of Christ's victory over death for us, his resurrection the pledge of ours — his entrance into heaven the earnest of ours. — "A feast of fat things," etc.

3. In this feast we behold the rich clusters of the *Promises*.

There is a richness beyond all description in such sentiments as these: "Behold the Lamb," etc. "Come unto me.——rest." "He is able to save," etc. "Him that cometh," etc. "I will be a Father unto you," etc. The promises are *great* and *precious*. Great, for they are given by the great God, whose greatness exceeds the comprehension of the greatest of created intelligences; great, for they are the vehicles of great blessings, like ships laden with jewels, silver, and gold. Great in number, like the stars of heaven. Great, for they produce great and lasting effects upon the soul. Precious are they to the afflicted pilgrim—to the persecuted, the tempted, and the tried. They sweeten the waters of Marah—they smooth the pillow of sickness—they irradiate the valley of death. Eternity alone can disclose their greatness, and proclaim their sweetness. "A feast," etc.

4. There is not only variety, but *rich abundance*. The Gospel is called "the unsearchable riches of Christ," and its doctrines are "according to the riches of his grace;" expressions implying that they are great and glorious, and replete with the greatest interest.

Rich in interest are the paths of science; glorious is the earth with all its productions, vegetable and animal. Its mountains, its valleys, its rivers, its seas, and oceans, etc. etc., are rich in interest. Its commerce, its mechanical contrivances, etc., are full of marvels. And then yon stars, yon sun and moon, those beautiful heavens, worlds upon worlds throughout boundless space, are overwhelmingly grand. — But all this is subordinate and inferior in interest to that boundless love of God, which prompted him to give the Creator of this earth, of that genius, that philosophy and science, of those heavens, and of those innumerable worlds, to DIE, by which to provide us the feast of fat things, and the soul-cheering wine of the Gospel. Compared with the wonders of the cross, and the unfathomable abysses of Divine love disclosed to us in the Gospel, they appear flat, insipid, and uninteresting. "A feast," etc.

Rich abundance! It is a *feast*. "He giveth liberally." Yes, abundance! All the saints on earth, and the innumerable company round the throne, are feasted sumptuously every day; and the provision is so far from being exhausted, that it is not in the least impaired. Glorious mystery! Christ is both the matter and the master of the feast.

V. *This feast nourishes and gladdens the soul*. There can be no spiritual life, no spiritual joy, without frequent participation. We must have the "sincere milk of the word," the feast of fat things, and the wine, and the promises, *that we may grow thereby*. 1 Pet. 2 : 2.

Yes, they "grow in grace," who come to this feast. The feast—the wine—makes them joyful. "Eat, O friends, drink abundantly, O beloved." You cannot take too much. The more you take, the better. Men may be filled with wine to excess, but not with the new wine of the love of Christ. "His love is better than wine." How different this wine from the wine of the choicest grapes! This has slain its thousands, while the former has saved its thousands; the latter has brought to rank maturity the most hateful vices, while the former has brought

to glorious perfection the most illustrious graces; the latter has conducted to hell, while the former leads its recipients to heaven. — Come to this feast then, and drink this wine, and you shall rejoice with joy unspeakable, etc. It gladdens the Church on earth—and in heaven—they will never again be sad in that Canaan.

“Where the Lord his vineyard keeps,
And where the clusters grow.”

VI. This feast is of a *social nature*. Church fellowship. You sit together in the house of God—at his table—to partake of the feast. You meet together at his throne. “Behold how good and pleasant.” Acts 2 : 46, 47.

VII. It is *freely bestowed*. Isa. 55 : 1, 2; Rev. 22 : 17.

Lastly. This feast is accessible, and all are invited. “In this mountain,” etc., says the text. On Mount Calvary the cross was erected—on Mount Zion he ever liveth to make,” etc.—“Who-soever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved.” Matt. 22 : 9.

APPLICATION.

Value and enjoy this feast. You will know its value ere long—in death—in eternity.

The refusal of such a feast will involve the most awful results.

LXII.—AFFLICTIONS.

“Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground; yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.”—Job 5 ; 6, 7.

MAN is born in sin, and therefore born to trouble. There is nothing in this world we are born to, and can truly call our own, but sin and trouble; both are as the sparks that fly upward. Actual transgressions are the sparks that fly out of the furnace of original corruption. Such is the frailty of our bodies, and the vanity of all our enjoyments, that our troubles arise thence as naturally as the sparks fly upward; so many are they, and so fast does one follow another. Why then should we be surprised at our afflictions as strange, or object to them as severe, when they are the effects of sin, and under the Divine superintendence?

I. THAT AFFLICTIONS ARE THE COMMON LOT OF MAN. “He is born to trouble,” etc.

1. These afflictions are grievous, various, numerous, and successive.

(1.) Man is frequently the subject of *disease*. Painful—prostrating—protracted.—Or he suffers from it relatively. Some members of his family are sick and nigh unto death.

(2.) Subject to *worldly losses and embarrassments*. Induced, it may be, by the injustice of others—his plans fail—speculations unsuccessful—or embarrassment may be the result of long and protracted sickness.—— Yet all is acute and painful.

(3.) *Poverty*. Lack of the comforts of life—frequently in straits—the way apparently hedged up. This may be the result of the preceding—it may be the effect of sin—of imprudence.——

(4.) *Bereavements*. The loss of some dear friend, the desire of the eyes—the object of affection, consigned to the dust.

(5.) *Persecution*. The result of enmity, envy, malice. The character traduced and blasted. Slander is like a dagger to the upright and conscientious mind.

(6.) *Approximation to death*. Health vanishing—strength decaying—faculties are impaired. Such sensations are painful.

2. *None are exempt from afflictions*. For wherever there is sin there is trouble. “Man is born,” etc.

The poor endure it, the rich are not exempt. To the pious a bitter cup is assigned, and the wicked too have aching heads and hearts. Grandeur, nobility, royalty, are also associated with trouble. And the heart of the peasant and that of the monarch are alike smitten with anguish. In youth, in middle age, in later life, there is trouble. In health, in wealth, in honor, in elevation, there is trouble. In successful enterprise, in vast pecuniary accumulation, in official stations, in beautiful mansions, and splendid palaces, there is no exemption from trouble. Go where you will, you will find it. Take the wings of the morning, and fly to the uttermost parts of the earth, and even there you will find it. Enter the deep shades of solitude, it is there. Crown yourselves with rosebuds; take the exhilarating wine; engage in the giddy dance; listen to entrancing music and convivial songs; visit the drama, and other scenic performances, and you may for a season drown your sensations as to sorrow; but the clouds of trouble are sure to gather over your heads. You are *born* to trouble. It is your inevitable lot. You have yet to sicken, to suffer, and die.—Brethren, you know that “in the world ye must have tribulation,” etc. etc.

3. Afflictions are designed for *chastisement*. They form a kind of punishment for sin committed.—— It supposes some fault which it is intended to correct. Perhaps the sufferer has neglected God and his soul—has been worldly-minded—another has been remiss and negligent, cold and indifferent in spiritual affairs. Afflictions are designed to awaken—correct, reform, divert from sin and the world—and to transfer the affections to heaven. They “are for our profit.” Heb. 12 : 10.

But though Divine chastisements are punitive, yet not vindictive, like those *inflicted on the wicked*, either in time or in eternity.—— Punishment is of two kinds, vindictive and corrective. The one is in wrath, the other is in love; the one is for the good of society, the other for the good of the individual, to recover from the evil which affliction is intended to correct.

“By affliction God separates the sin which he hates from the soul which he loves :

and two things should comfort believers under them : first, what they suffer is not hell ; and second, it is all the hell they shall suffer. Our enjoyments are greater than our afflictions, and our afflictions much less than our sins. The more we fear sin, the less we shall fear sorrow ; and it is a worse sign to be without chastisement, than to be under chastisement."

II. THAT AFFLICTIONS ARE DIVINELY APPOINTED.

When we see no natural cause for what befalls us, we are ready to ascribe it to mere accident. — When our plans have been well concerted, and the means of their accomplishment have failed, instead of suspecting that the hand of God is against us to defeat the enterprise, we are ready to impute it to some unknown cause, or to imagine that it arose from chance. Eccl. 9 : 11.

The source of affliction is not

1. *Chance* or mere *natural causes*. "They come not from the dust." If from chance, there would be nothing wise, intelligent, reasonable, or good, in them. The circumstances would be dark, confused, and miserable.

The only remedy, supposing things came by chance, or by mere second causes, would be that which the wicked generally apply, — attempting to forget the calamities that befall us. So far indeed as things are supposed to come by human agency, there is often worse than no reason for them ; for in proportion as the hand of man is in our troubles, we have to complain of injustice, oppression, and deceit. —

2. Afflictions, in general, are Divinely appointed.

This truth has been greatly abused by wicked men ; and sometimes injudiciously applied by good men. Still it yields effectual support to the Lord's afflicted ones. Job could say, "He performeth the thing that is appointed for me." David rejoiced to say, "All my times are in thy hand." Judah in captivity derived comfort from the Divine appointment : "Who is he that saith, and it cometh not to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?" Lam. 3 : 87. And Paul comforted the Christians at Thessalonica by the doctrine of Divine appointment : "No man should be moved by these afflictions, for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto." 1 Thess. 3 : 3.

This doctrine is comforting, for it indicates that

(1.) Our afflictions will be mingled with mercy. They are appointed by our Father, who knows our frame, etc. They are sent by the God of love.

To one that loves God, it is a great comfort to see his hand in everything that befalls us. We can take well what he does, let the conduct of mankind be what it may. It is enough, and ought to be enough, that it is the Lord's doing, and let him do what seemeth him good. "I was dumb," Ps. 39 : 2. When Job was deprived of all his substance by the Chaldeans and Sabeans, he said, "The Lord gave," etc. To have everything ordered and arranged by him is all that we can desire.

(2.) Afflictions are *sent in wisdom*. And it is highly conciliating to view every separate event as a part of one all-wise scheme, and

to know that when our plans are frustrated, God's plans remain unalterably wise. He knows what is best for us, and we shall have to confess it.

(3.) Afflictions are designed to produce *glorious results*. "All things shall work together for good," etc. According to the present system, all our present ills are the seeds of future bliss, and will be followed by a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory in the kingdom of God's dear Son.

When such sublime results shall be realized, we shall perceive that "afflictions came not forth of the dust," etc.,—that they were blessings in disguise.

APPLICATION.

1. Christians, be thankful that afflictions are "chastisements," sent to correct, and not to destroy; sent in love, and not in anger. 1 Cor. 11: 32; Rev. 3: 19.

2. If we are ready to faint in the day of adversity, pray—look to Jesus—remember his sorrows. Heb. 12: 2. Be patient.

3. Be submissive. Their design is our sanctification—our glorification.

LXIII.—SELF-EXAMINATION.

"Let a man examine himself."—1 Cor. 11: 28.

THIS is a duty of great importance, and which requires to be discharged with the utmost care and fidelity. — It is a duty sadly neglected. If it were more regarded, there would be more individual holiness and happiness—there would be less formality and apathy in the Church—religion would be rendered more attractive to the world. If a man regularly investigate his secular affairs, he knows his state, and acts accordingly: if he neglects the investigation, the results may be painful. "Let a man examine himself."

I. THE DUTY ENJOINED. "Examine himself."

To "examine" means to inspect, to make trial, to enter upon a strict inquiry, and, for this purpose, to commence with our own hearts. We are also exhorted to "prove ourselves," to try ourselves as metals are tried: if found pure, they are approved; if not, they are rejected, and esteemed as reprobate. Jer. 6: 30.

This duty is personal. It begins at home, where the duty is required. Some are apt to examine other persons uncharitably and with censoriousness. It is possible for us to see the mote in our brother's eye when there is a beam in our own.

Let us examine ourselves,

1. As to *our acceptance with God*. Have we ever been convinced of our lost estate? Have we ever felt ourselves to be helpless?

Has Christ ever been revealed to us as *our Saviour*? Have we been reconciled to God by faith in him? Have we ever rejoiced in pardoning love, justifying grace, the privileges of adoption?—

2. As to our *faith*. Do we heartily believe the doctrines of the Gospel? Do we live upon them? Can we say, like Paul, “I am crucified”? Gal. 2 : 20. Are we free from a self-righteous spirit? Has our faith fruits—works—to prove its vitality? James 2 : 14.

This is a point of such importance as to involve our salvation. If we are in the faith, all the other graces will follow in their train.— If not in the faith, it matters not what else we are, our hopes and our work are all in vain. John 3 : 36.

3. As to our *hope*. If faith be right, hope will be right. Heb. 11 : 1. There can be no hope without faith. Does it lift up our head in trouble? Does it deaden us to the world?

4. As to our *connection with the Church*. Is it any better for us? Are we an honor to it, or an impediment to it? Do we desire, seek, pray for, and contribute to, its prosperity? Can we say, “If I forget thee”? etc. “One thing have I.”

5. As to our *behavior in the world*. Are we separate or conformed? Do we shine in it? Do we seek its salvation?

6. As to the *trials of life*. Do we murmur and repine? Are we patient? Do we come out of them as gold refined?

II. THE MANNER OF PERFORMANCE.

1. With *solemnity*. It is a weighty affair—the business of the soul. It has an aspect on eternity.

2. *By comparison*. Compare our disposition, spirit, and conduct with the *preceptive part* of God’s word—with the *examples* of Christian conduct recorded there.

3. *Impartially*. Not attaching too much importance to our infirmities—not apologizing on account of our circumstances. Impartially, as in the presence of the heart-searching God.

4. *Frequently*. When we read and hear the Gospel—apply it. At the close of each day—on that bed, where, before morning, we may die. On the Lord’s day. Before attending to the ordinance of the Lord’s supper. See 1 Cor. 11 : 28.

5. *Prayerfully*. Invoke God to do it for you, and to suggest to you your duty; “Search me, O God,” Ps. 139 : 23, 24. Pray for forgiveness—for quickening—for strength—for faith, and vigorous life.

III. THE IMPORTANT ADVANTAGES RESULTING FROM THE DISCHARGE OF THIS DUTY.

It is essential to our improvement, our interest, and felicity.

We need it. We are so liable to err—to become unwatchful—to neglect our duty.

It will lead to humility — to repentance — to faith — to a right and healthy state.

It will warn us of danger, and lead to our deliverance and safety.

Even as a mariner keeps a lookout, throws out his line, makes his observations, and repairs the smallest injuries; so, in the voyage of life, a Christian who would not make shipwreck of his faith, must be watchful and diligent, and make it his express business to look into his state, and ascertain his progress. 2 Cor. 13 : 5.

It will lead to greater spiritual enjoyment.

It will induce preparation for death, and give confidence and hope in the prospect of eternity.

LXIV.—CHRIST A REFINER.

A METAPHORICAL SKETCH.

"For he is like a refiner's fire. And he shall sit as a Refiner and Purifier of silver," etc. — MAL. 3 : 2, 3.

In the context, Malachi predicts the coming of the Messiah, which, to the pious Jews, was an object of great desire. But, at that time, the majority of the Jews were wicked, or formalists and hypocrites. To them the prophet intimates that Messiah's appearance would involve a test or trial which very few would be able to stand. "But who may abide," ver. 2. Who shall stand the test of his doctrines, the trying dispensation which shall attend the setting-up of his kingdom? No hypocrite can endure his doctrines, or stand before his tribunal. The bestowal of his grace, the allotments of his providence, are designed to promote purity, and to this the carnal mind is opposed. Persecutions, for Christ's sake, test men.

I. A Refiner must be distinguished by ability and skill suitable to his calling.

Jesus Christ possesses pre-eminent qualifications for refining and purifying a people unto himself. His knowledge, wisdom, skill, and searching penetration, are infinite. He understands the nature of the materials he has to purify:—what degrees of refining heat they require to render them pure. He has himself been subjected to the refining process.——He knows how to feel for others. Hence, his sympathy is unbounded. All that he did and suffered is designed to refine. Tit. 2 : 14.

II. Gold or silver, previous to the refining process, is full of dross. In its natural condition it is mixed with earth and other matter, which must be separated.

Christ delivers his people from this present evil world. He calls them from its condemnation, its practices, its defilement, and from the

love of it, to the service of God. Their hearts are full of corruption, full of evil; but he refines them. He purges away their dross, and says of them, "This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise." That there is dross in the soul, see Job 25 : 4; Matt. 15 : 19. — And as gold and silver sometimes become tarnished, by neglect and carelessness, so God's people become unwatchful, partly lose their zeal, and neglect the means of grace; they accumulate dross, and it is necessary to submit them to the furnace to quicken and refine them.

III. A Refiner has his Furnace, to the heat of which he subjects the precious metals, for the great purpose of purification.

So Christ has his Furnace, his "fiery trial, which is to try them." 1 Pet. 4 : 12. To purge his people from the dross of sin, as seen sometimes by their worldly conformity, by their declining love, by their lethargy in his cause, by inefficacy in spiritual warfare, he puts them into the furnace of affliction, to wean their hearts from earth—to teach them its vanity and cause them to seek a more enduring substance. "The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold, but the Lord trieth the hearts." Prov. 17 : 3. "Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." Isa. 48 : 10. See also Zech. 13 : 9. — *Various afflictions*, sometimes very severe and inscrutable, and nearly overwhelming, constitute the fire of that furnace in which the people of God are tried. —

IV. A Refiner melts the gold and silver, and makes it very soft, and thus renders it fit for his purpose.

Christ melts and softens his people by the furnace of affliction and by his Spirit. The heart was hard, refractory, and unwilling before. Now it is soft, yielding, and obedient. "Behold, I will melt them, and try them," etc. Jer. 9 : 7, or what way else can I adopt to make them pliable? "God maketh my heart soft." Job. 23 : 16.

V. A Refiner, to expedite and to perfect his work, sometimes heats the furnace more intensely.

Christ, if he sees that the heat of ordinary afflictions and trials will not purify and refine the soul of a believer, adds greater afflictions, puts them into a very hot fire, greater trials, according to his own wisdom. "Manifold temptations." See 1 Pet. 1 : 6, 7; 4 : 12.

VI. When the metal has been sufficiently subjected to the heat, all the dross appears on the surface, which the refiner carefully removes.

So the furnace of affliction brings to the mind of the believer a deep sense of his imperfections and sins, etc. He is deeply humbled, he confesses to God through Christ. His sins are taken away. He is delivered in a good degree from pride, worldly-mindedness, etc. He rises from his bed of sickness endued with renewed affections, more holy desires, and resolves to devote himself to the glory of Christ. It is by this furnace of affliction that the graces are matured, and that the soul is conformed to the suffering Redeemer. "Tribulation worketh," etc. Rom. 5 : 3-5; James 1 : 2, 3; Heb. 12 : 10. Tried faith, tried patience, and tried love, are highly esteemed; they are infinitely more valuable

than tried gold. This is the fruit of all to take away "the dross and tin of sin." "I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir." Isa. 13 : 12.

VII. A Refiner refines gold several times successively, designing to make it very pure. We read of "silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." Ps. 12 : 6.

So the afflictions of God's people often succeed one another. If one will not do, then another, and another, will be sent to refine his servant. Hence God speaks of purifying his people *seven* times, Job 5 : 19.

VIII. Refiners of silver *sit* with their eyes steadily fixed on the furnace, that they may watch the process; and the process is never complete and perfect till the Refiner sees his own image in the melted mass.

Christ *sits* by the furnace as the great Refiner. All is under his wise and compassionate management. "When thou passest through the fire, I will be with thee." He sits there to temper the heat according to the infirmities and weakness of his children. He sits there to comfort them, and to carry on the process, till he discerns in their souls, in their tempers, and in their practice, the *reflection of his own image*; and he will maintain and carry on this refining process till his people shall enter heaven, when they shall be "perfect and entire, wanting nothing." The Church triumphant will bear his image and reflect his glory. They "shall be like him," "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

A few ladies in Dublin were reading the above passage; when one of the ladies gave it as her opinion that the fuller's soap, and the refiner of silver, were only the same image, intended to convey the same view of the sanctifying influences of the grace of Christ.

No, said another, they are not just the same image; there is something remarkable in the expression in the third verse: "*He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.*" They all said, that possibly it might be so. This lady was going into the town, and she promised to see a silversmith, and report to them what he said on the subject. She went, without telling him the object of her errand, and begged to know the process of refining silver; which he fully described to her. "But do you *sit*, sir," said she, "while you are refining?" "Oh! yes, madam, I must *sit*, with my eye steadily fixed on the furnace, since if the silver remain too long, it is sure to be injured." She at once saw the beauty and the comfort too of the expression: "*He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.*" Christ sees it needful to put his children into the furnace, but he is seated by the side of it. His eye is steadily intent on the work of purifying; and his wisdom and his love are both engaged to do all in the best manner for them.

The lady was returning to tell her friends what she had heard; just as she turned from the shop door the silversmith called her back, and said that he had forgotten to mention one thing; and that was that he only knew that the process of purifying was complete, *by seeing his own image in the silver!*

When Christ sees his image in his people, his work of purifying is accomplished.

He that from dross would win the precious ore,
Bends o'er the crucible an earnest eye,
The subtle searching process to explore,
Lest the once brilliant moment should pass by,
When in the molten silver's virgin mass,
He meets his pictured face as in a glass.

Thus in God's furnace are his people tried:
Thrice happy they who to the end endure:
But who the fiery trial may abide?—
Who from the crucible come forth so pure,

That He, whose eyes of flame look through the whole,
May see his image perfect in his soul!

Nor with an evanescent glimpse alone,
As in that mirror the refiner's face:
But stamped with heaven's broad signet, there be shown,
Immanuel's features, full of truth and grace:
And round that seal of love this motto be,
"*Not for a moment, but — Eternity.*"

IX. A Refiner in refining gold and silver wasteth his fuel.

Christ sometimes in the refining of his Church wasteth the wicked who are his fuel, and by whose instrumentality he frequently tries them. The fire of God's wrath seizes upon them, as in the case of Pharaoh, whilst they are persecuting his people.

X. Real gold receives no injury from fire, though it may decrease as to bulk, when put into the furnace. But it is only the separation of the dross that lessens the size. Pure gold is so fixed that *Boerhaave* says, an ounce of it set in the eye of a glass furnace for two months, did not lose a single grain.

And sincere Christians will abide the day of his coming, when he shall sit as a Refiner, in a day of distress and tribulation, and though the Church thereby shall be made less in bulk and quantity, the formal and drossy part exceeding in number the precious metal, yet in quality it will shine forth more gloriously, and be more acceptable to God.

APPLICATION.

1. Thank God for his refining process. It may be grievous, but afterwards it yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness. It works out a far more exceeding, etc.

2. Are we pure gold, and not dross, or counterfeits? The Furnace of trial will make a clear discrimination of us. "Every man's work shall be tried so as by fire," 1 Cor. 3 : 13.

3. What an awful thing to be found mere dross — to be castaways!

LXV. — LIGHT IN DARKNESS.

"Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." — Isa. 50 : 10.

THE mission of Christ is here foretold by the prophet. His character as the Great Teacher — his obedience as the servant of the Lord — his sufferings as the Mediator for man, and the acceptance of his sacrifice, are here predicted. Here, in the work of Christ, we see light and salvation — joy and support, for the perishing sinner, and the trembling saint. "Who is among you."

I. THE CHARACTER DESCRIBED.

1. *Those who fear God*: "Feareth the Lord."

(1.) Once they did not fear him. It is not natural to man to fear God; that is, to love and reverence him. Man as a sinner hates him—his guilty conscience dreads him. He trembles at death when he expects to meet him.

(2.) They now fear him. They love him—desire to please him, and fear to offend him—they do his will and seek his glory.—— All this indicates *a great change*, of which they are conscious, and of which they give evidence to the world. Mal. 3 : 16.

A change from guilt and misery to the enjoyment of all spiritual blessings.

A change from alienation from God to reconciliation with him, through Christ. Eph. 2 : 1-6.

A change from hatred to God to the sincere love of him.

A change from worldly companionship to Christian fellowship. "I am a companion of all them that fear him."

2. *They are obedient to Christ*. "That obeyeth the voice of his servant."

Christ is a servant. Isa. 42 : 1; 53 : 11; Phil. 2 : 7. He was delegated to be so for man's salvation, and having succeeded, God highly exalted him.—Head over the Church—its lawgiver, etc. And all true believers obey him. They obey him at conversion by repenting and believing—by the profession of his name—by union with his people—by fighting his battles—by working in his vineyard.——

They obey from the heart—obey his will, his precepts—they obey constantly, cheerfully, and perseveringly.

They obey him in preference to man—as the only legislator. "Call no man master." Matt. 23 : 8-10.

II. *THEIR STATE*. "Walketh in darkness, and hath no light."

This was often the case with the Jews—it is so with the people of God now. Christian experience has been the same in every age.

The time of *spiritual conviction* reveals to the sinner the darkness of sin—that his course has been evil, loving "darkness rather than light"—that sin "exposes to the blackness of darkness forever." He is in darkness about the salvation of his soul till Christ the great Prophet reveals it to him. Eph. 5 : 8, 11.

It may signify *the darkness of doubt*. Some think their unworthiness so great as to doubt of the Divine acceptance.——Some doubt the willingness of God to save them.——Some doubt the existence of grace in their hearts.——Some fear that they will utterly fail of the grace of God, and be castaways at last.

A time of *backsliding* is a dark and awful state. It involves the loss of character—of comfort—of usefulness—of hope. The returning backslider can best describe the darkness of his state. Blessed consolation! A backslider may be saved. Prov. 14 : 14.

Darkness represents *a state of trouble*. Isa. 8 : 22.—The darkness of affliction — of poverty — secular losses, and bereavements.

Darkness expresses *perplexity, bewilderment*. Divine Providence often mysterious. "Clouds and darkness." So Jacob was perplexed. Gen. 102 : 36.

Approach to death is a season of darkness which requires Divine light, Job 10 : 21, 22.

III. THE ADVICE GIVEN. "Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

1. *The name of the Lord* is very expressive.

It implies all the attributes of the Deity.

It implies that all these are engaged to promote man's salvation and happiness.

It implies that these all centre in Christ, that they are all exercised in man's redemption. "My name shall be in him," Ex. 23 : 21 ; Isa. 7 : 14 ; 9 : 6 ; Matt. 1 : 23.

2. *To trust in the name of the Lord*, implies,

A knowledge of his character ; "they that know thy name, will put their trust in thee."

It implies faith, confidence, repose, a committal to his hands, Eph. 1 : 12, 13.

Dependence upon him alone. "Some trust in chariots," etc. Ps. 20 : 7.

It implies prayerful application to God for relief in our respective states.

Convinced sinner, trust in the name of the Lord ; there is salvation in that name ; the Saviour's name, Christ Jesus, "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Trust, and he will save thee. Though thy sins be numerous like the sands of the sea, and black like midnight, or as hell itself, trust in God through Christ, and all shall be forgiven.

Ye doubting ones, trust in the name of the Lord. The gracious import of that name is sufficient to banish all doubt. His grace will cover and forgive all your defects. Ex. 34 : 6. Why should you doubt when God takes pleasure in you ? Ps. 35 : 27. Your doubts intimate anxiety to be right ; they indicate some vitality existing within you. Trust him, "he will perfect that which concerneth you ; he will not forsake the work of his hands." Ps. 138 : 8. Trust him, he will finish the work he has begun. Phil. 1 : 6.

Trust, ye backsliders, in the name of the Lord, for he says, "Return unto me."—"Why will ye die ?" Hosea 14 : 4.

Ye afflicted and perplexed, with various ills, trust, etc. There is enough power in that name to deliver you — enough wisdom to guide you — enough love to save you — to save to the very uttermost. Mysterious and complex may be his procedure, but he does all things well ; he is guiding you in a right path that leads to the city of habitation.

Do you fear death? He can irradiate that dark valley, and make you happy and triumphant there. Ps. 23 : 4.

Stay yourselves upon your God. Have fixedness of heart or trust in him. See Isa. 26 : 2, 3. This will be sure anchoring for you amid the dark storms of life. See Ps. 18 : 17-19.

Rejoice, the Lord is your God, and will be all to you that you want. Light in the darkness of ignorance; light in the darkness of perplexity; light in the darkness of doubt; light in the darkness of trouble; and light in the darkness of death. "Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." Ps. 112 : 10.

LXVI.—THE LOVE OF CHRIST.

PART I.

"For the love of Christ constraineth us," — 2 Cor. 5 : 14.

THE love of Christ is the most interesting subject that can be presented to the contemplation of the human mind. History, science, philosophy, and romance, can furnish nothing like it, to create the interest which it excites. And the reason of the difference is this,—the influence, the effects of Christ's love are everlasting. The former awaken our attention only as to this world, but the love of Christ unveils eternity, and points out the glories of that heaven to which it will shortly introduce its recipients. — The blessings of Christ's love are needful, invaluable, immensely abundant, infinitely enriching, and everlasting. The love of Christ, as a converted Heathen observed, is *like the ocean*. In all ages men have been taking from its waters, yet the ocean remains full as ever; so men in all ages have been drinking of the stream of Christ's love, yet there remains a fulness that can never be diminished.

As to the influence of this love it is most powerful. There can be no true and successful exertions without it. Paul said, v. 13-15.

I. AN INCOMPARABLE SUBJECT, *the love of Christ.*

The love of Christ is manifested by his voluntary engagement to become the surety of guilty and ruined men—entering into their circumstances, enduring the penalty of the law, and fulfilling all the great purposes of his mission to effectuate man's redemption. "Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it." Eph. 5 : 25-27.

This love is described by height and length, and depth and breadth; high as heaven above, to which it exalts us, deep as hell beneath, from which it saves us, long and broad as our spacious world, and lasting as eternity. — Consider,

1. *The essential dignity of Christ.* The love of Christ is the love of Deity.

Strong is the love of man to man — and under the influence of grace,

mutual Christian love shall exist forever. — Great is the benevolence of angels. They joy over one sinner that repenteth — are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation. Poor, diseased, and neglected, as was Lazarus, yet they conducted his spirit to Abraham's bosom, and they shall gather the elect, etc. — But the love of the text is the love of "God our Saviour." The love of men and of angels is the love of created beings; the love of Christ is the love of their Creator, the Creator of all things. The Divinity of Christ is vital to our faith and hope, and that Divinity makes his love so great, so unsearchable, and past finding out.

Is creation *his*, as the work of Deity? "Without Jesus nothing was made that was made." — Is providence his? "By him all things consist." — Has he universal dominion? "He is Lord of all." — Is the inspiration of the Scriptures his prerogative? "The prophets," etc. 1 Pet. 1 : 10, 11. — Is he God Almighty? "I am Alpha," etc. — Is he omniscient? "All the Churches," Rev. 2 : 28. — Is he omnipresent? "Where two or three." — Is he the self-existent? "Thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." — Is he the eternal? "His goings forth are of old, from everlasting." — Is he to be loved? "If any man love not," etc. — Is he to be trusted? "Believe on the Lord Jesus," etc. — Is he to be adored? "Let all the angels of God worship him."

And the Scriptures throughout connect Deity with the manifestation of Christ's love. "The only wise God our Saviour." "The great *God*, even our Saviour." "Immanuel, *God* with us." "The everlasting Father, the mighty *God*, the Prince of peace." "Awake, O sword," Zech. 13 : 7. "Look to me, and be ye saved; for I am *God*, and there is none else." "Surely in the *Lord Jehovah* have I," etc. "This is the true *God*, and eternal life." "As the *Father* hath loved me, so have I loved you." "Hereby perceive we the love of *God*, because he laid down his life for us."

This love then is the love of the Deity. How great then must it be! Christ is God; and he who would fully know his love must be able to span immensity, and to grasp the Infinite himself.

But this Divinity is the ground for the efficient performance of his *Mediatorship*. It is the love of omnipotence, and cannot be effeminate. It is the love of "the Mighty God," "travelling in the greatness of his strength;" and the broken law — the insulted Majesty — the sword of inflexible justice — the wrath of God — and the vengeance of eternal fire — all shall be triumphantly met by him. "He shall send forth judgment unto victory."

The Divinity of Christ's love is the ground of the saint's confidence. When guilt strikes its sting into my conscience; when my heart is cast down within me; when I am in earnest for salvation, and say, "What must I do to be saved?" insult not my anguish, trifle not with my despair, by pointing me to a mere man, a creature as myself. No, ye angels! there is not one of all your shining ranks to whom I would commit the care of my immortal spirit! Not all your angelic wings could waft me to the sky! You could not, with all your power, free me from sin. There is not one among your thrones, dominions, etc., able to "open the book of redemption, and to unloose the seals thereof." None, none but the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, Immanuel, God with us, none but he can save.

2. Christ's love appears in his condescension *to assume human nature.*

He came "from heaven," he "came into this world!" What a contrast between heaven and earth! In yon heaven the first-born sons of light had adored and praised him in the loftiest strains. What a contrast between the songs of the cherubim and seraphim, and the insults and blasphemies poured out against him by the vilest of sinners! In that heaven he managed the affairs of the universe; in this world he took upon himself the "form of a servant," and served sinners. He came not to earth in his essential glory; that would have consumed the guilty, and convulsed the world. No, he dismantled himself of his ethereal splendor; he put by for a season the most resplendent glories of the Godhead, and condescended to appear in fashion as a man, in the likeness of sinful flesh. Phil. 2: 6-8. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." His prayer for the glory which he had before the world was, indicates both a pre-existent glory, and a future glory; but there is an interval between them; an interval of darkness extending through his life. That was the duration of the grand, the total eclipse of the Second Person in the Trinity. And O how deep the obscuracion, when compared with the ineffable splendor of the glory from which he came and the glory into which he was received! Contemplate Christ as now glorified. Behold him as the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne. Listen to the loud acclamations of heaven: "Worthy is the Lamb." Rev. 5: 12. And then look at him in the human nature, esteemed as a root out of, etc. See him standing silent, and patient of insult, at the bar of a creature, and that creature a sinful man. Behold him submitting to the lowest expressions of ignominy and contempt from other sinful men, and measure the depth of the love by the depth of the humiliation. "He made himself of no reputation." Who can conceive the greatness of this love? Tell us what was the glory he had before the world was—tell us of the magnificence of the place where he dwelt—tell us of his sensations produced by his transi-tion to earth—by the enshrinement of Divinity in a body prepared for him—of his sensations produced by poverty, hunger, thirst, obloquy, and persecution to the death; tell this before you can fully comprehend the love of Christ.

3. Christ's love appears in offering himself *as a sacrifice for sin*, which involved unparalleled sufferings and an ignominious death. "Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin."

The wages of sin is death, and his love shrank not from the full and awful satisfaction required. It was death in the sinner's place. It was attended with anxious forebodings. "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and O how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" How often did he advert to the coming hour, that hour that should derive its fearful emphasis from suffering unto death! It was the endurance of the curse for man. Then that curse must have been felt by him; it was more than a mere apparent infliction. The real fact is declared by the Apostle; "Who in the days of his flesh," etc. Heb. 5: 7.

Behold him in Gethsemane and on the cross! The Prince of this world cometh! He is sore amazed! 'Tis the hour and power of

darkness!" He sorrows unto death. An invisible hand smites him. The sword begins to pierce through his heart. He speaks in fear and agony: "Father, if it be possible," etc. He said to his disciples, "Can ye drink of the cup which I am to drink?" etc. They said, "We are able;" but they knew not what they said, and he himself drinks it all away. What must have been the distractions of his mind,—the renderings of his heart! So acute was his agony that it deranges the organization of his veins! The warm blood flows from every pore, and falls to the earth. Under the weight and pressure of his sorrows he falls to the ground. But the work is done. Judas and his train come to apprehend him, but he lifts himself up into Divine majesty, saying, "If ye seek me, let these go their way." "For this end came I into the world."

Follow him to Golgotha, and behold him on the cross; the shameful cross—the instrument of torture designed for malefactors the most vile. See his sufferings! See his shame! Then was the prophecy fulfilled: "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint," Ps. 22: 14, 15. "Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness; and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." Ps. 69: 20, 21. This language expresses the extremity of his sufferings. It is no indication of unwillingness or retraction. No! on that cross he is resigned and calm, but determined to win the spoils, while he is indifferent to the horrors of the crucifixion. They mock him—they laugh at him—they reproach him—they blaspheme him, but he is not discouraged. Though drowned in sorrow, he is full of majesty. The soldiers seized his vesture, and the populace wagged their heads in derision, but he was not dispirited! He prays for the forgiveness of his murderers. He beseeches heaven for his mother. He throws open the gates of Paradise to a malefactor. And then he begins to die. The veil rends! The rocks shiver! The sun darkens! The earth trembles! The grave yawns! The dead are startled to life! And now he who had not opened his mouth for a sigh or a groan, utters his bitter complaint. It is not at man; he can destroy him! It is not at hell; he defies it! O what is that complaint? Be astonished, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! His death-dirge points against the very heavens. "*My God! my God! why forsakest thou me?*"

Can you comprehend these mysteries—the baptism of blood—the last mysterious agony—the complaint of being forsaken of God? You feel you cannot. They transcend all your thoughts; and the love which made him stoop to them is therefore love "which passeth knowledge."

4. *The love of Christ is displayed in dying for SINNERS.* "For scarcely." Rom. 5: 6-8. "The Lord looked down from heaven." Ps. 14: 2, as quoted Rom. 3: 10, etc.

Ponder this description of man's character, so odious and repulsive. He is a rebel, dark, impure, and an enemy to God by wicked works. The nature of man is deeply impressed and impregnated by sin. Now look at man's nature. As to his intellect, he hates truth and loves error. As to his will, it is rebellious and ungovernable, spurning the control of God himself. As to his affections, they doat on that which they ought to abhor, and hate whatever is morally excellent and lovely. As to his

temper, fierce, malignant, and cruel. As to truth, hollow and hypocritical. As to benevolence, selfish. As to humanity, in many cases, unfeeling, hard, and cruel. There was not a favorable trait in man's character. Everything was hateful and repulsive; and yet Christ loved him and died for him!

O unparalleled love! A man may be induced to die for his beloved friend. A Damon may offer himself to die for Pythias. David may wish that he had died for his son Absalom; but who would die for a thief, a robber, a murderer? But Christ died for the chief of sinners—for murderers! His love was mercy in opposition to every disgusting quality. That love was *unsolicited*. Did our first parents ever sue for admission into the Divine favor? They are never delineated with clasped hands and prostrate knees. They flee! the fugitives hide themselves in the trees of the garden. Ah! this love was unmerited and unsolicited.

5. The love of Christ appears in *the great and innumerable blessings* which it secures.

It turns away from man the wrath of God. It turns the curse into a blessing. It gives man access to God, and communion with him. It absolves all his sins and delivers him from all condemnation. It renews his nature, causing him to resemble God. It invests him with the fellowship of the saints, the love of the Almighty Father, and the hope that is laid up in heaven. It gives him the protection of Omnipotence, the guardianship of angels, triumph in death, and admission to heaven. "All things are yours." "God is *now* able to make all grace to abound to you." 2 Cor. 9: 8. "My God shall supply." Phil. 4: 19. "Where sin abounded." Rom. 5: 20.

The benefits of Christ's death are beyond all estimate. Then what must be the greatness of his love? You could tell, if you could number, in those realms of light, the myriads who will finally be placed there as the fruits of it, but they are a multitude which no man can number, and their voices are as thunder, and as the commingled sound of the countless swellings of the waves of many waters.—What is the value of Christ's love? You could tell, if you could describe the ecstatic bliss of the heavenly harpers; if you could gauge that overflowing ocean of joy, and those exalted pleasures which are at God's right hand forevermore.—You could tell if you could describe the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," and that crown of life destined to grace the head of every saint.

Here then is "the love that passeth knowledge." Dost thou think to comprehend it? Dost thou think to bring it down to thy mind? First, "take the waters into the hollow of thy hand, and mete out heaven with the span, and comprehend the dust of the earth in a measure, and weigh the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance."

APPLICATION.

1. What a ground of hope for the penitent sinner!
2. What a source of joy for believers!
8. The rejection of such love involves the deepest guilt.

LXVII.—THE CONSTRAINING INFLUENCE OF CHRIST'S LOVE.

PART II.

“For the love of Christ constraineth us.”—2 Cor. 5 : 14.

THE truth of the Gospel receives a triumphant confirmation from the devotedness, disinterestedness, and sufferings of the Apostles. For in laboring for Christ they could not have been actuated by the love of filthy lucre, as their profession then could not possibly obtain it; nor by the love of honor or fame, for their profession secured scarcely anything but scorn and contempt. To be an apostle—a propagator of Christianity then was to be exposed to the most cruel persecution, and to martyrdom itself. What then was the motive, or power, that induced them to labor, and suffer, and die? It was a firm belief in the reality of Christ's mission—it was an experimental acquaintance and enjoyment of salvation, as the fruit of the Redeemer's love. By this they were constrained. “For the love of Christ constraineth us.”

Having previously considered the love of Christ, let us now consider;

II. ITS CONSTRAINING INFLUENCE.

To constrain means, to urge, successfully persuade, to bear away, to transport, to impel forward.——Observe,

1. The love of Christ possesses a constraining power. It is so replete with interest—so worthy of all acceptance, that it must constrain. [Here recapitulate the manifestations of Christ's love, PART I.]

How mean are other subjects compared with this! The news of a decisive battle, followed by permanent peace, may constrain to triumphant joy; but what a victory Christ obtained for us!—Other themes, etc., may delight us, but, etc.

2. To be constrained by the love of Christ implies *a knowledge of that subject, and an experimental enjoyment of it.*—We cannot be constrained by that of which we are ignorant. Why does a man praise his benefactor—a patient his physician—a scholar his tutor? etc. Because he has seen the manifestation of their benevolence, or skill, or wisdom. And because he has experienced them.

So we must have an experimental knowledge of Christ's love, or it cannot constrain us. “We love him because he first loved us.”

All just discriminating views of the Saviour's love are ascribed to *Divine illumination*. “The God of our Lord,” etc. Eph. 1 : 17. “No man can call Jesus, LORD, but by the power of the Holy Ghost.”

The love of Christ does not constrain the soul till *we feel we are saved by it*. His love has comprised my case, may the Christian say; he has delivered me from captivity; he hath pardoned and set me free. “He

hath sent from above, he hath taken me, he hath drawn me out of many waters. He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me because he delighted in me." — This is the hidden mystery, "Christ in us the hope of glory." In consequence of this love, our meditation of Christ is sweet—many a transport does it awaken—many a flame does it enkindle—many a song does it tune.

3. Christ's love is the great *instrument of high and holy attainments*. See those attainments described, Rom. 5: 1-5. The source is, "the love of God shed abroad," etc.

It produces *trust*, and that induces steadfastness and perseverance, and conquest over spiritual foes. Yes, and that faith anticipates heaven as the home of rest for the believer. — It leads to *prayer*, and so receives blessings from God; it produces love to everything that is like Christ, all holy thoughts and objects of meditation, which shed their sanctity upon the soul, and transform us into their own image. Holiness is the element of love, and it bears the soul into it.

4. It constrains to *die to the world*. Gal. 6: 14. The love of the world and the love of Christ are antagonist principles. 1 John 2: 15. They cannot coexist.

If we love Christ supremely, we cannot so love the world as that it shall chill our affections, incrust our hearts, or destroy the fine sensibility which thrills at the very sound of the Redeemer's name. Begone, vain world! The love of Christ is sublimating my affections, and raising them to a nobler and immortal world. —

5. Christ's love constrains us as the root and nutriment of charity to man. Read 1 Cor. 13. This beautiful state of mind, comprehending all kind and holy affections, it is the office of the love of Christ to produce.

His love becomes the great model of our Christian zeal and benevolence. What he was we are to be in the world. He has a cause, and what does he seek? To save the soul. Such also is our business. The love of Christ will lead us,

- (1.) To save souls from death.
- (2.) To love the Church, the brethren, and seek its harmony, peace, and prosperity.
- (3.) To consecrate our respective talents to advance his glory.
- (4.) To contribute of our substance for the support of his cause. How much he gave for us!

6. To *heroism and magnanimity in suffering for his sake*.

Think of the first Christians, and their readiness to serve Christ, and to speak of his name. Their hearts were not like wax that melteth, but firm as adamant; and when they were called to die, they counted it all joy. They felt it to be a most distinguished honor. They leaped into the pile as into a chariot of fire. They heard of death, and they felt it to be the gale that wafted them to glory. "For I reckon that the sufferings," etc.

Lastly. *It removes terror from futurity*, and causes ardent de-

sires to behold Christ and commune with him forever in heaven. —Futurity discloses the world where Jesus is. That is enough; that is the heaven of heavens to a Christian; and hence his "desire to depart, and be with Christ, which is far better."

APPLICATION.

1. Let us examine our motives.
 2. See the cause of the apathy and inefficiency of the Church. The constraint of love is not felt. The Church is too professional.
 3. It is an awful thing not to love Christ. "If any man love not." 1 Cor. 16 : 22.
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LXVIII.—THE CHRISTIAN'S GLORIOUS PRIZE.

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"I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."
—PHIL. 3 : 14.

THE service of God is not an empty one. It produces great bliss in this life—and it shall be crowned with everlasting honors. How cheering was this truth to the Apostles amid all their conflicts! How it stimulated them to perseverance! "I press," says Paul.

The text evidently and beautifully alludes to the Olympic games among the Greeks, in which rival candidates fought, wrestled, or ran to obtain a prize. This prize was of little value; but it was anxiously sought as an honorable distinction conferred on the successful candidate. — Consider,

I. That the Christian's prize is preceded by the Christian race, or a course of piety.

God has called his people from the pursuits of sin to engage in his service. This is called a holy calling, 2 Tim. 1 : 9, a heavenly calling, Heb. 3 : 1; and frequently the calling of God, Eph. 1 : 18; and to denote its dignity and glory, it is here said to be "*the high calling of God.*"

He has called them by his word and Spirit. For the Spirit says, come; and the bride, the Church, says, come, by her ministers, etc. He calls them to repentance — to faith — to renewal of heart — to practical holiness — to holy labors — and to Christian enjoyment.

This calling is of God's free grace, and not from anything meritorious in man, nor from any power in the creature. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth."

It is a *high calling*. Look at its *origin*, at its *source*; "of God." Look at its *nature*; it is holy, honorable, useful. It is the service of God — akin to that of angels. Look at its *termination* — heaven, and all its glory. It is a high calling.

II. That this high calling of God is followed by a glorious prize.
"For the prize."

The "prize" mentioned here, and in 1 Cor. 9 : 25, refers to the crown awarded to the successful foot-runner in the Olympic games.

The immediate reward of the victor was a garland of leaves, which faded and perished soon. The victor's garland in the Isthmian games was of pine leaves; in the Olympic games, of wild olive; in the Pythian, of laurel; and in the Nemean, of parsley. Besides these, there were some important emoluments and privileges, which rewarded the victor; but the "corruptible crown" was the immediate and sensible reward of the victor in the games, and probably was at the time more thought of than other ulterior benefits, since it gave the right to them all, and covered the person who wore it with honor and distinction in the eyes of assembled Greece.

1st. The Christian Racer's prize is invaluable and everlasting, especially as contrasted with those of Greece.

It is eternal life and glory; and called a crown of gold—of life—of righteousness—an incorruptible crown, not like their fading and perishable garlands. It is a crown that fadeth not away. Such language indicates *purity*—happiness—triumphant joy—uninterrupted rest—exalted honor—all crowned by an endless perpetuity. — It is a throne, but not an earthly transitory one—the throne of God and the Lamb. Rev. 3 : 21.

2d. This prize is faithfully promised and presented to us by Christ himself, to stimulate us forward. —

In the Grecian games the leafy crown was placed upon a pole at the end of the race-course, that those who ran might see it. — Jesus in heaven holds up the crown of life to the eyes of his people's faith, and says, as they run, "Be thou faithful," etc.

What a glorious hope is this! "We are saved by hope." "Looking for that blessed hope." "The hope that is laid up for you in heaven." This hope animates and gives life to action. It cheers the laborer and the sufferer for Christ. It supports the afflicted and animates the dying. — Moses had "respect to the recompense of the reward." Paul and his colleagues endured the sufferings of persecution in hope of the "glory to be revealed." And for the "joy that was before him, Christ endured the cross."

3d. The prize shall be publicly and honorably bestowed.

This will be at the last day. "We must all appear," etc. "Give to me at that day." 2 Tim 4 : 8. "When Christ who is our life." Col. 3 : 4. "Shall be rewarded according to our works." Matt. 25 : 31, etc. "Come, ye blessed." He will not be *ashamed* of his people then, but will confess their name before his Father, and before his angels. Rev. 3 : 5. Holding up the crowns of life, the garlands of immortality, before an assembled world, he will say, These, my beloved, are for you. You have been despised and persecuted on earth, and your name cast out as evil; but I honor you now. Take these crowns and wear them forever. "Enter ye into the joy of your Lord."

III. That this prize was purchased by Christ, and will be given by virtue of his sacrifice.

Glorious, but affecting thought! His meanness, the scorn which he received, the persecutions which he endured, purchased my immortal honor. That crown of thorns was worn by him that I might wear the diadem of glory, etc. — Hence the glorified saints say, "Unto him who loved us," etc. "Thou art worthy to receive," etc. Rev. 1:5; 5:12; 7:14. "Giving thanks to the Father who has made us meet," etc. Col. 1:12. Hence it is the prize of *the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*. Which God, by Christ Jesus, bestows.

IV. The Christian race and the prize to crown it, demands intelligent and vigorous exertion, "I press towards the mark." — This implies,

1st. A knowledge and adoption of the prescribed course.

"Towards the mark." This refers to the *white lines* that marked the ground in the stadium, from the starting-place to the goal, on which the runners were obliged to keep their eye fixed; and they who trespassed beyond these lines, diverging from the path which they marked out, lost the prize, even though they got first to the goal. Indeed, if, as some state, the course was bounded on one side by the river Alpheus, and on the other was kept by men with drawn swords, a greater danger was involved in any deviation, than the mere loss of the victor's crown. "I press towards the mark:" I pursue along the prescribed line; "I run not as uncertainly." I know what I am about.

Our conduct must be according to the Divine will. It must be regulated by the precepts and example of Christ.

2d. A constant animating view of the prize. "For the prize." The racer kept the prize in view. He thought of the honors awaiting him. — And should not the Christian? Keep that crown ever before you — in every scene. It will animate.

3d. Perseverance and determination to win. "I press towards."

This phrase, and "reaching forth," v. 13, point out the strong exertions made in the race; every muscle, every nerve, is exerted, and he puts forth every particle of his strength in running. The original expresses the manner in which the racer stretches his head and hands forward in anxiety to reach the goal.

And Christians are called upon to strive, to run, to endure, to be steadfast, to fight, and faint not. There is to be a holy agony. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence." Press forward!

There are impediments; overcome them.

There are many enticements to draw you aside; O resist them. Let the superlative glories of heaven cast the pleasures of sin into the shade.

There are many discouragements; surmount them.

We are all apt to tire. Press forward. "Be not weary in well-doing."

Press forward. Time is flying; eternity is at hand; thy all is at stake.

4th. Reliance on Divine strength. See Isa. 40:29-31; Ps. 27:14.

APPLICATION.

- 1st. See the value of religion. It terminates in eternal glory.
- 2d. What is the state of our piety? Is it vigorous? Do we press towards?
- 3d. How important it is to run well! Made a spectacle to all. Our false brethren, our persecutors, and Satan, long for our fall. Angels, Christ, God, all heaven urge us to press towards the mark.

LXIX. — MINISTERIAL JOY.

"For ye are our glory and joy." — 1 THESS. 2 : 20.

THE Church at Thessalonica was distinguished by much Christian excellence, though but recently converted from the grossest idolatry. Yet they made greater attainments in the Divine life than many who had much longer possessed the means of grace. Their conversion, their faith and devotedness to Christ, inspired the Apostle with joy, and, looking forward to the great day of retribution, he tells them that it will be a rapturous thing to present them as his hire, and the seal of his Apostleship, in the presence of Christ, at his coming. v. 19, 26.

It is a blessed thing for members of Christian churches when sincere and faithful ministers think well of them. When they can say, like Paul, "That I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me." Rom. 1 : 12. — Consider,

I. THE CHARACTERS WHO ARE THE JOY OF FAITHFUL MINISTERS.

It is not the mere hearers of the word — not the merely professional — not formalists — or the lukewarm, or apathetic. There are some who, instead of causing joy, cause much sorrow. Phil. 3 : 18.

1st. They who have been *converted by ministerial labor*. It was so with the Thessalonians, 1 Thess. 1 : 4, 5, 9. The word of God had convinced them of sin, etc. — It is delightful to witness the word of God taking effect.

2d. They who enjoy *salvation* by faith in the sacrifice of Christ, and rejoice in pardoning mercy and justifying grace. — What a joyful circumstance was the conversion and salvation of the 3000 at the day of Pentecost — of the inhabitants of Samaria — of Lydia — of the Jailor, who rejoiced in God with all his house!

3d. They who *cordially believe the Gospel* — from the heart, and *maintain an inviolable attachment* to it in times of opposition.

The Thessalonians firmly believed the Gospel as the word of God, and not of man, and for it encountered persecution; ch. 2 : 13, 14. Persecution tries the love and sincerity of the Church. Blessed are they who stand fast! The Apostles did — primitive Christians and the martyrs did. But it is distressing to see some fainting in the day of adversity.

4th. They who *maintain the Christian character before the world*. This is important. Hence Paul said, 1 Thess. 4 : 12. And Christ said, "Let your light." What an appeal Paul made, 1 Thess. 2 : 10. It matters not how brilliant the profession—how vaunting the pretensions—how great the liberality, if the conversation be not honest among the Gentiles.

5th. Those who *make progress in spirituality*, and are becoming rich in Christian experience. The minister, perhaps, can refer to the time when they were babes in Christ, but now they are aspiring after the fulness of the stature, etc.

Look at the piety of the Thessalonians. 2 Thess. 1 : 3, 4. Their piety was exemplary. 1 Thess. 1 : 6-8. — They who wish to grow in grace, love the house of God—the word, and the ministration of it—prayer, public and private—Christian intercourse, and all the means of grace.

6th. They who abound in charity or love. The charity of the Thessalonians became proverbial. — It is not sufficient to be sound in the faith; we must also abound in love. A man may have an orthodox creed while his heart is cold and dead. There is the work of faith, and also the *labor of love* to be performed, and where religion is genuine, it will be active.

Another important feature in the conduct of the Christians at Thessalonica was that of *brotherly love*, 1 Thess. 4 : 9, 10. — There must also be *liberality*, or the cause of Christ cannot advance.

II. INQUIRE WHY SUCH CHARACTERS INSPIRE MINISTERS WITH JOY.

If the minister be a mere hireling, who seeks not you, but yours, he will not be much concerned about your spiritual state, but if he be the Lord's servant, watching for souls, etc., it will be the life of his soul. Hence Paul said, "For now." 1 Thess. 3 : 8. "For ye are our glory and joy."

1. The existence of such characters affords an evidence of *ministerial fidelity*—that they have not handled the word of God deceitfully.

Usefulness in the conversion of sinners may not always be an evidence of personal religion in the preacher; God may honor his own truth while he despises the instrument. — But when a minister connects his fidelity with eternity, and says, "For what is our hope and our joy," etc., it is a proof of his sincerity, and of his acceptance with God.

2. It is an *answer to prayer*—Probably prayers mingled with tears. "They who sow in tears shall reap in joy."

3. In them the *great object of the Christian ministry is answered*. They are converted—they are saved from perdition—they are made the children of God. They are his chosen—his people—heirs of God and immortal life. Glorious achievement!

4. It *glorifies Christ*. He sees of the travail of his soul. The minister is anxious to honor him in the salvation of man.

5. The conversion and salvation of sinners will give *efficiency to the Church* in advancing the kingdom of Christ. What good may the conversion of one sinner effect! "I will bless thee and make thee a blessing." What efficiency was given to the Church when Saul of Tarsus was converted!

6. Faithful ministers rejoice on the ground of *mutual recognition* in heaven. We are not merely companions on earth. We shall associate in glory. We apostles shall meet and know those whom we have been the means of converting here, at the judgment-day. "For what is our hope," etc. "They that be wise," etc.

APPLICATION.

1. Does the Church, do ministers, regard me now with joy, or with grief?

2. Our conduct here will influence eternity.

3. How dreadful will be the state of those who are not benefited by ministerial labor!

LXX.—PRAYER FOR THE DIVINE PRESENCE AND INFLUENCE.

"The Lord our God be with us, as he was with our fathers: let him not leave us, nor forsake us: that he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his judgments, which he commanded our fathers."—1 KINGS 8 : 57, 58.

THIS chapter contains the sublime prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple. — After which he proceeded to bless the people. He pronounced the blessing standing, as one having authority. It is beautiful, appropriate, and very impressive. It consists of a solemn and earnest appeal to God to manifest his presence, and continue it with Israel, as his chosen people. — The same prayer is applicable to the Church now. Its necessities are great — nothing but the Divine presence can comfort and prosper her.

Solomon's prayer embraced the Divine presence—its continuance — its influence.

I. THE REALIZATION OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE: "The Lord our God be with us."

He does not mean the essential presence of God, Jer. 23 : 24 ; Ps. 139 : 7.

It is God's *gracious presence*.

He is present with his people in a way in which he is present with no other. The judge on the bench is present with the criminal at the

bar; but in his own house he is present as a father with his family. What a difference betwixt the two! God in his nature and essence is as near the wicked, as he is near the righteous, as near his enemies as his friends, but how great the difference! God is graciously present with his people as their Father. —

He is present with them by the operations of *his grace and Spirit*. See Ps. 5 : 11. God is in the sanctified soul as in his holy temple, 1 Cor. 3 : 16. He is with them because he takes a particular interest in them—he delights in them. Beautifully expressed, Isa. 62 : 3, 4. — There is,

1. His *guiding* presence. It is not in man to direct his steps. God has promised to guide. Ps. 25 : 9; 143 : 10. And Asaph says, Ps. 73 : 23, 24.

2. His *protecting and defending* presence. Gen. 17 : 1; Ps. 5 : 11; 20 : 1; 7 : 10; 59 : 9, 16, 17; 46, which see; also, Isa. 54 : 10, 17.

3. His *strengthening* presence. Isa. 41 : 10; Ps. 84 : 11; Isa. 40 : 29.

His comforting presence, John 14 : 16–18. He *communes* with them, 1 John 1 : 3. This they enjoy in prayer—in ordinances—in solitude—in affliction—in death. Ps. 23 : 4.

God has ever been present with his people. “As he was with our fathers.” See how he guided Israel, Ex. 13 : 21; Deut. 32 : 10; Num. 23 : 21–23.

II. THE CONTINUANCE OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE. “Let him not leave us nor forsake us.”

Hence the presence of God is essential to our comfort, strength, happiness, and the consummation of salvation.—Therefore leave us not,

1. To our own wisdom, or we shall fall into error and darkness.

2. To our own strength; for we are weak, and shall stumble, and fall, and perish.

3. Leave us not without thy Holy Spirit. Let not our sins scare away the Holy One from our hearts. “Uphold us by thy free Spirit.”

If we have not the Divine presence, no earthly object can make up the deficiency. Neither wealth, honor, friends, etc. If we have it not, then perdition is our prospect.

III. THE INFLUENCE OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE. “That he may incline our hearts unto him,” etc. The language is expressive,

1. Of *love*. The heart is inclined to God. As the heart of a child to a parent. This must be the effect of the Divine presence. The more we feel of it, the more will our hearts be inclined to him. Without the heart in it, religion will avail us nothing.

2. *Obedience*. “To walk in all his way.” “This is the love of God that we keep his commandments.” Faith has works; without

them, it is dead. The ways of God are holy, safe, pleasant, and the heart of a Christian is inclined to them. He desires to walk as Christ walked.

3. *Fidelity*. "Keep his commandments," etc. Not merely to obey his statutes, etc., for a season, but to keep them perpetually. Love the truth, the precepts, the promises, the ordinances, and hold them fast. Your fathers *observed* them. So do ye. Maintain your faith — maintain your obedience — maintain your hope.

LXXI. — GOD'S WORD A PRESERVATIVE FROM SIN.

"Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." — Ps. 119: 11.

THIS Psalm is one continued eulogium on the sacred Scriptures; and though little more than the five books of Moses were then known, yet the Psalmist finds in them such an assemblage of beauty and excellence, as to demand his highest admiration and esteem. He not only perceived their excellencies, but he felt their power. He deposited the precepts and promises of God in his heart, and proved their value and efficiency to preserve him from sin, to comfort him in trouble, and to cheer him in a dying hour. — And Christians must "let the word of Christ dwell in them richly, in all wisdom," which will preserve them from sin, and make them wise unto salvation.

I. THE GREAT OBJECT WHICH DAVID WISHED TO SECURE. "That I might not sin against thee." — Observe,

1. It is *natural to man to sin*. The heart is corrupt. The fountain of moral action is impure. All true believers know and feel this. Though they are saved by grace, yet they feel that in consequence of inherent depravity, they are prone to sin. Rom. 7: 18, etc.

2. Christians are surrounded by *many temptations to sin*. The world is full of enticements and snares, which often attract and conquer the unwary. The heart of the Christian, therefore, needs fortifying by the Divine word and the Spirit.

3. There are two special reasons why the Christian is anxious to avoid sin.

(1.) *Its evil nature*. Faint are the conceptions which we can form of the malignity of sin. What must it be in the estimation of Him who is infinitely pure, who regards it as abominable, and who cannot look upon it with the least degree of allowance! It is so hateful to him that he declares it shall not go unpunished. "The heavens are not clean in his sight, and he charged the angels with folly."

Its malignity arises from the consideration of the glorious and holy

Being against whom it is perpetrated. It is against God. Ps. 51 : 4.—It arises from the equity of the Divine government. Had its requirements been unreasonable and injurious, there would have been something to lessen the guilt of violation; “but the law is holy, and the command is holy, just, and good.”—It is an insult against our great Benefactor, our Creator, the Father of our spirits, who daily loadeth us with his benefits. It is rebellion and ingratitude the most foul.

(2.) Its *awful effects* both in time and eternity.—As it regards the sinner, it has darkened his understanding, and alienated his affections from God. He spreads an evil and destructive influence around him. He is the subject of misery. “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.” He is planting thorns in his dying pillow. And what are his prospects, but a fearful looking for of judgment? For he is under the curse.

As it regards the believer, if he should relapse into sin, what mental agony! See it in David, Ps. 38 and 51.—What a source of sorrow to the Church—what a source of triumph to the wicked—and how it impedes the progress of the truth!

II. THE IMPORTANT EXPEDIENT ADOPTED BY THE PSALMIST TO PRESERVE HIM FROM SIN. “Thy word have I hid in my heart.”

It is evident that the Psalmist regarded it as a most precious and efficient remedy—and as a treasure. Hence he hid it in his heart, that it might be ready to him whenever he required the use of it. It must be deposited in our hearts, inwoven in our natures.

By carefully reading and studying it.

By attentively hearing it, with self-examination.

By prayer for the Holy Spirit to enable us to understand it, and to rivet it on our hearts, that it may dwell in us richly in all wisdom.

If we have the word only in our houses and hands, enemies may take it from us; if only in our heads, our memories may fail us; but if it be hid in our hearts, and mould them, and make an impression there, all is safe, Deut. 11 : 18; Josh. 1 : 8.

But, it may be inquired, in what way does the word of God preserve from sin?

When hid in the heart, the Christian regards it,

1. *As the word of God*, and not as the word of man. As really inspired—as perfectly true. Such a belief causes the Christian to regard the Scriptures as authoritative, and binding upon his regard and supreme obedience, 1 Thess. 2 : 13. Without such a cordial and hearty belief, the power of the Divine word cannot be felt.

2. *As the perpetual standard of all moral excellence.* All its inculcations tend to purity. “Follow after holiness, without which,” etc. By the purity of its precepts the believer is convinced of his short-comings; is stimulated to fresh acts of obedience, and renewed efforts to mortify the deeds of the body.

The word of God is also regarded as the test by which every doctrine is to be tried. “To the law,” etc. Isa. 8 : 20. The Christian sees

such a glory in the Divine character, that he could not admit any doctrine that derogated from it, however specious it may appear. The notion of universal restoration of the children of perdition, at some future period in eternity, is an error of this description. It wears a plausible aspect, and pretends to be founded in a principle of universal benevolence, while it opens the floodgates of iniquity, by impugning all the Divine threatenings, and offering the fallacious hope of deliverance, at some future time, to the lost. The direct tendency of this doctrine is to lessen the obligations, and relax the efforts of men to obedience; it quells the conscience, hardens men in an evil course, and says it shall be well with them at last, while God says, *It shall be ill with the wicked.*——Then the Antinomian notion, which affirms that the law is not a rule of life, is equally pernicious and dangerous. Every Divine injunction is delivered to us in the form of a law, whether written in the Decalogue or in the New Testament. The dignity and authority of the great Legislator so pervades the revelation of his will, as to make it eternally binding, and nothing can release from obligation but the repealing of his law.——The Christian, therefore, feels bound to hate sin. He says, Rom. 6 : 1, 2, etc.

3. Its doctrines present the most powerful motives against sin. He looks at the sufferings and death of the Redeemer. In that intense agony, that bloody sweat, that transfixing on the cross—the desertion of his Father—the endurance of the penalty—he sees in all these complicated and unparalleled sorrows, “the exceeding sinfulness of sin.”

Why is he redeemed? The Apostle declares, Titus 2 : 14. Why is he regenerated? But to become “a new creature,” etc. Why is he adopted? But to bear the image of him who adopts. What is the tendency of all the doctrines of grace which he has received? The Apostle declares, Tit. 2 : 11, 12. Why is he preserved? The Apostle declares, 1 Thess. 5 : 23 ; Col. 1 : 22.

4. The Christian is influenced by *the exemplary piety* of the Scriptures, and is anxious to become a follower of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. He reads the biography of Bible saints, not merely as a spectacle for his contemplation, but that he may kindle a torch at their blazing altar, and aspire after their attainments.

When he reads of the chastity of Joseph, the courage of Shadrach, etc., the zeal of David, and the love of John, he feels enraptured by the beautiful picture of moral excellence, and his heart is enlarged. He is stimulated to pray for their spirit, and to imitate their conduct. When he reads of the ardor and magnanimity of Paul, he catches a sort of seraphic zeal, and accompanies the hero in his march through the Heathen world, sympathizing with him in all his perils. Contrasting himself with that holy veteran, he feels his insignificance, and prays for more grace. And, above all, when he contemplates the character of his Saviour—his ardent love, his ineffable meekness, his profound humility, and unexampled obedience; he perceives such a bright constellation of virtues, that he is dazzled by their splendor, and longs and prays to be impressed with his image and likeness.

Thus the Christian is encompassed about with a great cloud of witnesses, whose brilliant and holy career has a tendency to influence him to lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily besets him, etc. Heb. 12 : 1, 2. The word of God is hidden in his heart, as his counsellor, his guide, and his pattern, and it is the compass and chart by which he is steered safely over the tempestuous ocean of life. This is its glorious effect, "that I might not sin against thee."

5. He is influenced by the hopes and promises of the Gospel — and these preserve from sin. He has a good hope, through grace, of entering heaven. "Every man that hath this hope purifieth himself, even as he is pure." 1 John 3 : 2, 3.

A view of the purity of heaven causes him to mourn his impurity; it leads him again to the fountain which cleanses from sin and uncleanness; it deadens his affections to this world — it leads him to greater conformity to God. He expects to reign with him in ineffable purity and glory forever, and he wishes to enjoy as great a degree of that purity here as possible. — Ask the believer why he hopes for heaven: he will tell you because it is a place of purity. He does not rejoice in it so much as a state of felicity, or of high enjoyment, but as a state where he will be wholly free from sin. This it is that vibrates upon his inmost soul, and fills his lips with unutterable praise. It is true that with pleasure he contemplates heaven as a state of felicity, but it is its purity that enhances its worth, and mingles itself with all his delightful anticipations.

The promises hid in the Christian's heart ever intimate to him that he is destined to live in a pure heaven, with holy angels, with perfected spirits, etc. Can he, therefore, wilfully indulge in sin? No! he passes the time of his sojourning here in fear, abhorring that which is evil, etc. "That I might not sin against thee."

APPLICATION.

1. What an invaluable treasure is the word of God!

2. Aim to experience its purifying influence in every scene of your pilgrimage. Hide it in your heart, and in *affliction* it will preserve you from murmuring, and make you patient, and confident in God. — Hide it in your heart, and in *prosperity* it will humble you, and cause you to aspire after a more enduring substance. Hide it in your heart, and in your *intercourse with the world*, it will make you watchful, cautious, the sons of God without rebuke. — Hide it in your heart, and it will give you many a rich *foretaste* of the powers of the world to come; it will cheer you in the dark valley of life, and in the desert cause you to utter songs of joy. — Hide it in your heart, and when you *come to die*, it will animate your drooping spirits; as the chart of your predestinated inheritance, it will disclose to the eye of your faith its unutterable felicities. Then it will be sweeter to you than honey, yea, sweeter than the honeycomb.

LXXII.—CHRIST THE WAY TO HEAVEN.

"I am the way."—JOHN 14 : 6.

IN the former verses Christ endeavors to comfort the hearts of his disciples in prospect of his departure from earth. "Let not," v. 1. He tells them that the great design of his departure to the cross to suffer and die, and of his ascension to heaven to reign, is to prepare a place for them in his Father's celestial house, intimating also that at a future time he would remove them from earthly sorrows, and receive them in a glorified state, to himself, never to part again. ——— What Christ said to his disciples he says to his people now. ——— The disciples were ignorant of the great design of Christ's coming. They dreamed of a temporal kingdom in external pomp and power, and doated upon this notion, though he had frequently told them to the contrary. "My kingdom is not of this world." Hence the inquiry of Thomas and the answer of his Master; "I am the Way."

A Way obviously implies a place to which it leads. In the preceding verses, Christ says he was going to heaven. Heaven is the dwelling-place of God. To that glorious residence, and to God, Jesus Christ is the Way. ——— Consider,

I. THE PLACE TO WHICH THE REDEEMER IS THE WAY. It is Heaven.

Splendid and beautiful are the descriptions which the sacred writers give of heaven. They have selected the loftiest language and the choicest figures by which to represent its grandeur, its purity, its bliss, and immortality. The 2d verse supplies us with a beautiful view of heaven.

1. *It is the residence of the Deity.* "In my Father's house." There he dwells, there he holds his court, there he manifests his glory. Ps. 73 : 25 ; 1 Kings 8 : 30, 39, 43, 49 ; Isa. 66 : 1 ; Ps. 11 : 4.

2. *It is the residence of his family.* "In my Father's house." The inhabitants of it composed the happy, glorified household of God. What a pleasing idea of love and endearment does this representation give !

They are a family, and God is their Father, and Jesus Christ is their Elder Brother. That family embraces the brightest intelligences, holy angels, and glorified saints. ——— And, glorious thought ! that family includes saints here and saints there ; only the saints here are for an appointed time sojourners in this world ; but they are travelling home to God ; they will soon join the household of heaven ; shall soon be a part of that family ; Eph. 3 : 15 ; Heb. 12 : 22-24. It is a holy, harmonious, and happy household.

3. *Heaven is vast and capacious.* "In my Father's house are many mansions." An allusion to the great number of apartments

into which the temple was disposed; by which Christ represents those numerous seats of heavenly bliss which his Father's house contained, and which were prepared for the righteous.

There are many mansions; accommodation for all who die in the Lord. "Many sons will be brought to glory;" "they shall come from the east," etc., "out of every nation, kindred, and tongue—a great number which no man can number."

4. The residences of saints in heaven will be *permanent*. "Mansions;" durable dwellings—*Movae*, from *moveo*, *maneo*, abiding places. The house itself is lasting; our estate in it is not for a term of years, but forever. A *life-interest* in it, and believers *shall live forever*.

Here we have no certainty; our tent is frequently removed. There are mansions, abiding-places, and not movable tents, awaiting us in the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a "building above, a house not made with hands," etc. — Here everything is fleeting, shadowy, ephemeral, perishing. There everything retains its beauty, and loveliness, and splendor. Everything abides.

II. THAT CHRIST IS THE WAY TO HEAVEN.

Heaven would be of no value to us, if we knew not how to obtain it. In vain you tell me of its splendors, its streets of gold, etc. etc., if I can have no interest in them. — Blessed be God! though Paradise by sin has been lost, yet Paradise may be regained by faith in the Son of God; for he says, "I am the Way."

He has ever been the way. Divinely ordained, appointed, and qualified for this great purpose. — Adam went to heaven by this Way, and so did all the believing patriarchs. The Mosaic ritual prefigured this Way—the prophets proclaimed it, and went by it to heaven themselves. Christ and his Apostles declared redeeming love as the Way, the sure Way, the only acceptable Way. And O, ye enraptured spirits in heaven, how came you to your happy abode? Myriads of voices reply, "We washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." We came not here by works of righteousness, but through the grace of God. We scaled this holy mount by the ladder of the atonement.

This Way was needed. Contemplate man as a sinner—excluded and cast out from the Divine favor. He can have no access to God as a transgressor.

Human efforts, good deeds, works of supererogation, avail nothing to procure salvation. None of these will unbar the gates of Paradise. If all the goodness of men, from Adam to the present time, could be collected and concentrated in one individual, it would avail nothing. See Micah 6: 6. Jesus is the only way.

In what respects may Christ be said to be the way to heaven?

1. As he *revealed* it. Dark and obscure were the ideas of the ancient philosophers respecting a future state. But Jesus Christ threw a flood of light on this subject.

2. *By his Sacrifice.* He reconciles us to God by his death.

Having honored the law by a holy, impeccable life, he endured the penalty of transgression on the cross in our stead. 1 Pet. 3 : 18; Rom. 5 : 6-8. See Heb. 10 : 19-22.

— "In his blest life
We see the path, and in his death the price,
And in his great ascent, the proof supreme
Of immortality." —

The way is called "*new*," or fresh, and living; alluding to the blood of the victim newly shed, uncoagulated, and consequently proper to be used for sprinkling. The blood of the Jewish victims was fit for sacrificial purposes only so long as it was warm and fluid; and it might be considered as yet retaining vitality. Christ in this allusion is represented as newly slain, and yet living; the blood considered as ever flowing, and giving life to the world. The way by the old covenant neither gave life, nor removed the liability to death. The way then was through the dead bodies of the animals slain; but Christ is living and ever liveth to make intercession for us; therefore he is a new and living way.

3. He is the Way as he *gives his Holy Spirit*—to enlighten the mind—to quicken the soul, and to lead to the blood of the cross for forgiveness and acceptance with God. Without this Divine influence, we should never avail ourselves of this way to God and heaven.

Thus Christ is the Way,

(1.) *To God in this world.* Breaking down the middle wall of partition, and so making peace. Our guilt, impurity, and condemnation, are the barrier to access to God. But by virtue of his sacrifice, resurrection, and intercession, that barrier is removed.

(2.) He is the way *to heaven*; giving us a meetness for it, a relish for it, and earnest desires after it. "This is the record that God hath given us even eternal life, and this life is in his Son." And when we die, he gives us "an abundant entrance," etc.

4. He is the Way as he prescribes *the conditions or means* of salvation. He insisted upon repentance and faith as the essential conditions. "Repent and believe the Gospel." Forsaking of sin. The repose of the soul on the finished work of Christ. Access to God is said to be "with confidence by the faith of him." Eph. 3 : 12.

There is no access to unbelievers. They have none to take them by the hand, and introduce them to their offended sovereign; and as they believe not, the Mediator cannot take them into the Divine presence. We must join hands with Christ, and be of one heart with him, or the benefits of his mediation cannot reach us.

This Way is distinguished by several glorious excellencies.

1. It is a *plain* Way. Some ways are difficult to find. They are very circuitous, and crossed by many other paths, as almost to make them a maze—a labyrinth.—But there is nothing difficult to understand in this way. "A wayfaring man, though a fool, may understand

the way of salvation." It may be hid from "the wise and prudent," in many cases, but it is "revealed unto babes." Isa. 55 : 8.

2. It is a way into which all who comply with the conditions, *are gladly welcomed*. Welcomed by God, who rejoices over the returning sinner as did the father of the Prodigal. Welcomed by Christ, who says, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Welcomed by angels, who "rejoice over one sinner that repenteth." Welcomed by the Church, which says, "Come thou with us, and we will," etc.

3. It is a *free way*; open and unrestricted. It is a way of liberty, entirely adapted for poor, impoverished sinners, who have nothing to pay. All the blessings of salvation are "without money and without price."

4. It is a *safe way*, and will terminate happily, conducting to a glorious heavenly home. Safe; "Who can harm you if ye be followers of that which is good?" God protects. "If God be for us." Angels minister.

5. It is a *pleasant way*. Is safety pleasant? — Is liberty pleasant? — Is hope pleasant? Pleasant exercises — pleasant company: "Joy in the Holy Ghost." — Even when there are clouds, and storms, and tempests, it is pleasant. The Apostles gloried in tribulation — Paul and Silas sang praises to God when their feet were made fast in the stocks — and then the martyrs —

Lastly, let all remember that Christ is the *only way*. "There is none other name." "Other foundation."

LXXIII. — THE CHURCH THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD.

"The household of God." — EPH. 2 : 19.

THE transformations of grace are wonderful. A sinner, a captive of Satan — an heir of wrath, becomes the child of God, and joint-heir with Christ. From the slavery of sin, he is introduced to the privileges and honors of God's family. From the imperfections of earth he is ultimately elevated to the ineffable splendors of the heavenly inheritance. — This chapter beautifully portrays these transformations. Read it, Christians, and you will see what you *were* by sin, what you are *now*, and what you *expect to be* by grace.

All believers in Christ are called the Household of God. — Consider,

I. THE NATURE OF THIS HOUSEHOLD.

1. It is an *adopted* Household. Once "children of wrath, even as others," "aliens," and "strangers," "far off by wicked works."

But they are now the "children of God by faith," by faith in the blood of Christ, which has pardoned their sins, etc. They are now the "sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty." 1 John 3: 1.

2. A *holy* Household. They are regenerated — renewed in the spirit of their minds. 2 Cor. 5: 16.

3. An obedient Household. They acknowledge God as the Head of the family, and revere his laws. 1 Pet. 1: 2, 22.

Note, their regeneration and obedience to the doctrine and precepts of Christ, make them a *holy Household*. A holy nation — a peculiar people.

4. A *united* Household. This is the design and the influence of the Gospel. The unity of this household is its beauty — its glory, Col. 2: 19; Eph. 4: 3; Ps. 133: 1. Is there anything more lovely than a household united? Anything more powerful than an army united?

5. A *useful* Household. The most useful people in the world. "The heart of the wicked is but little worth." — "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor."

Look at the various efforts of this household to do good. Her ministers unfold the banner of the cross—they lift up the torch of truth. All her people seek the happiness of the world. "To do good, and to communicate, they forget not." — Look at the various institutions which this Household has established.

6. A *large* Household, Eph. 3: 15. Believers in Christ, here the spirits of justmen made perfect, in a separate state, and all the holy angels, make but one family, of which Christ is the Head. It is small when compared with the number of the wicked; but it will be large when the aggregate body shall meet in heaven.

II. THE PRIVILEGES OF THIS HOUSEHOLD.

1. The *love of an Almighty Father*. How frequently is this declared in the Scriptures! Jer. 31: 3. *Cum multis*.

2. The *special providence and care of an Almighty parent*. He is at the Head of this family. "He careth for us." Matt. 6: 25-30; Ps. 34: 10; 84: 11; Phil. 4: 19.

3. *Divine protection*. He throws the shield of Omnipotence over his children, and declares, "I will never leave," etc. "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye." Ps. 91.

4. *Divine and Christian fellowship*. With God and with his people. 1 John 1: 3; 1 Cor. 1: 9; 2 Cor. 13: 14; 1 John 1: 7.

5. *Divine Instruction*. By his word—Spirit—ordinances—chastisements.

6. *Heirship*. The prospect of a heavenly estate.

III. THE DUTIES OF THIS HOUSEHOLD.

1. *Praise to God* for connection or membership with it.

2. *A dauntless avowal of that membership before the world.* Be not "ashamed of Christ."
3. *Faithful discharge of the duties* devolving upon the Household. Worship—prayer—charity.
4. To labor after *its purity and glory* in the earth.
5. To promote *its unity and harmony*.
6. *Brotherly love*—sympathy—mutual help.
7. Constantly to *seek its prosperity*.

APPLICATION.

1. None but this Household will be safe in the day of trial.
2. Come into this Household.

LXXIV.—ATTACHMENT TO GOD'S HOUSE.

"We will not forsake the house of our God."—NEH. 10 : 39.

NEHEMIAH was distinguished for his rank and abilities, which raised him to the office of cup-bearer to the king, a post of great honor and influence in the Persian court. By his elevated office he had frequent opportunities of conciliating the favor of the king; and having great affection for the country of his fathers, which he knew to be in a most ruinous condition, he obtained the royal permission to visit and rebuild Jerusalem. The Jews having, at that time, just returned from captivity in Babylon, were menaced by the hostilities of Sanballat and some others. The object of Nehemiah was to counteract their evil designs, to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, and to establish the worship of Jehovah. He was distinguished by great faith, indomitable courage, and ardent attachment to God's house.

I. THE OBJECT OF NEHEMIAH'S ATTACHMENT. "The House of our God."

The term, "House of God," is applied variously in the Scriptures. It is applied, however, only to one object,—the Worship of God, whether anciently it was attended to in the open air, Gen. 27 : 19, or in the tabernacle, Judges 18 : 31, or in the temple, 2 Chron. 5 : 14, or as it will be in the heavenly temple, which is called the House of God, John 14 : 1. — Any building that has been erected by God's people, in which to worship him sincerely, and to promote his glory, may be called, The House of God. 1 Tim. 3 : 15; Heb. 10 : 21.

1. God is the *Proprietor* of this House. It has been designed by his wisdom, furnished by his grace, and it is defended by his power. How frequently do the sacred writers call it "his house"! and God calls it "My house," Isa. 56 : 5, 7.

2. It is the house where he *manifests himself*. Ex. 20 : 24; Matt. 18 : 20; 1 Kings 9 : 3; Ps. 132 : 13.

3. *It is the House of Salvation*. There the Gospel is preached. "Go, stand and speak in the temple all the words of this life." Acts 5 : 20. A full and free salvation is there proclaimed; a "feast of fat things." Sinners are made to feel their lost state, and are directed to fly to the refuge of the cross.

4. It is the *House of Instruction*. Sinners are instructed, and saints grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, in the house of God.

5. It is the *House of Comfort*. The broken-hearted are here bound up, and the wounded in spirit healed. The doctrine of the cross is a sovereign balm for every disease, and infuses a genial warmth into the coldest heart. The ordinances of public worship are the channels by which God conveys the richest consolations of the Spirit, and the inestimable blessings of salvation.

6. It is the *Antitype of heaven*. It prefigures the worship of heaven—the joy of heaven. But what a contrast!

II. THE NATURE OF THE RESOLUTION. "We will not *forsake* the House of our God."

God's house has always been neglected or forsaken by the wicked, the lukewarm, and the mere professor. — It was so under the Old Testament—so in the Apostles' time, Heb. 10 : 25, and it is so now. —Some wholly forsake it, and spend their time in sensual indulgence, or devote themselves, even on the Lord's day, to their secular callings. —Some are only occasionally present in the House of God, attending just when convenience or inclination may serve. Others are prevented by social engagements, or domestic visits, or they lay the blame on the weather. Some allege the distance of residence as an excuse for their absence, and some the want of apparel. Some come late—and are weary long before the service is over.

By this resolution Nehemiah and his colleagues intimated that they would punctually, sincerely, and zealously attend the house of the Lord to worship him; and this resolution implies,—

1. An acknowledgment of the *Divine authority for Public Worship*.

Divine worship is sanctioned by Divine authority, and the example of the saints in every age. Besides the Sabbaths, the new moons, and other public festivals among the Jews, all their males, at mature age, were required at certain times to appear before God in Jerusalem. Christ attended public worship. Luke 4 : 16. He prayed with his disciples. The apostles attended public worship, and enjoined it. "Not forsaking," etc. The promise of God to be present, to bless, etc., is authority sufficient.

2. It is a resolution arising from unwavering *belief of the truth*. The great doctrines which are the subject of ministrations, are believed to be true, and to possess a vital and saving power.

Skepticism and infidelity cause many to condemn the house of God. They affect to doubt the truth of Christianity, and to call in question the sincerity of its professors and advocates. "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God." But Christians are fully persuaded in their own minds, feeling a vital interest in the worship of God.

3. It is an indication of *spiritual vigor and life*. By our feeling and conduct in regard to God's house, we may ascertain the degree of our piety, and frequently that of others.

4. The resolution indicates *decision of character*. "We will go."

We will, if possible, allow no impediments to hinder us. We will not confer with flesh and blood. We will not be deterred by the meanness of the place, nor by the circumstances of the people. The faithfulness of the preacher, or the kind reproofs of our brethren, shall not deter us. The want of eloquence in the preacher, etc.; the inconsistency of some in the Church shall not deter us. — Sometimes persons become elevated in the world, and their pride tempts them to seek (as regarded by the carnal mind) more elevated, refined, and fashionable religious society. — But God hath "chosen the poor of this world," etc. Blessed are they who worship with them!

5. The resolution implies *anxiety to realize all the benefits of public worship*. How numerous are they! To this House we come burdened with sin, and it is removed; as weak, and we renew our spiritual strength, etc. etc. Look at David, Ps. 84. The droppings of the sanctuary cause the tree of righteousness to flourish, which otherwise would wither and decay, and to put forth the fruits and blossoms of immortality.

6. It implies *exertion to promote the prosperity* of God's house. "We will not forsake it." It shall have not merely our attendance, but our prayers, the consecration of our time, counsel, experience, talents, and substance.

APPLICATION.

1. The conduct of Nehemiah reproves us. Copy his spirit.
2. We shall soon have done with religious services; therefore value them as the means of preparing us for the future.
3. Bring your families, friends, neighbors to the House of God.

LXXV.—GOD THE FATHER OF HIS PEOPLE.

"And will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." — 2 COR. 6 : 18.

ADOPTION is a term derived from the civil law. In the time of the Apostle, it was customary for the Romans who had no children, to select and adopt the children of other persons, whom they made their

heirs, in order to prevent their estates from descending to strangers. The child was allowed to assume the name of the adopter, and to yield them the same respect and obedience as in the case of natural relationship. — Civil adoption was allowed and provided for the relief and comfort of those who had no children; but in spiritual adoption this reason does not appear. The Almighty was under no obligation to do this. — Adoption is an act of free sovereign grace.

I. THE NATURE OF ADOPTION. "And will be a Father."

This implies, —

1. *Separation from the world by regeneration.* This is insisted on in the context, v. 14-17. As a sinner naturally loves evil practices, and evil associations, it is necessary that his soul should be turned against them, and that he be induced by the Spirit, to "come out from among them, and be separate," as there can be no agreement betwixt God and them. — The children of God are born of the Spirit, etc. See John 3: 3-8; 1 Pet. 1: 23. — They have now a distaste for sinful practices. They resemble God, bear his image, and are partakers of the Divine nature.

2. *Adoption into the family of God by faith in Christ.* "I will receive you, and be a father unto you," v. 17-18. John 1: 12; Gal. 4: 4-7. "Ye are all the children of God by faith." It is through Christ that the sinner enters the Divine family. By faith in his blood, he is pardoned, justified, sanctified.

3. *An interest in all that blessedness which the term Father imports.* "And will be a Father to you." This denotes, —

(1.) *Great honor.* They have God's name put upon them, and are described as his people, called by his name. Eph. 3: 15. "Sons and daughters."

A relationship greater than that of which nobility or royalty may boast. — They are no longer slaves to sin and the world; but emancipated from its dreadful bondage, are raised to dignity and honor. Rom. 8: 15; 1 John 3: 1. 2.

(2.) *Infinite love and compassion.* Great, sometimes, is the love of an earthly father; but what must be the love of the Almighty? He calls them his people, his flock, his chosen, his portion, etc. Ps. 103: 13; Isa. 54: 5-10; Zech. 2: 8; Jer. 31: 3; John 16: 27.

(3.) *Parental provisions, or the supply of their wants.* Even temporal wants. Matt. 6: 31-33; Ps. 23: 1, 2; Ps. 31: 19. — The supply of all their spiritual wants. Ps. 84: 11; Eph. 1: 3. —

(4.) *Parental government over his children, becoming the character of an Almighty Father.* —

He protects them. As the master of a family is engaged to defend and secure all under his roof; so the Almighty parent will protect his people. Isa. 32: 18; Zech. 2: 5; Ps. 125: 2; 61: 4.

He assigns them their work. Matt. 25: 15; Luke 19: 13; Ps. 119: 32.

He gives them necessary correction. Heb. 12: 5-11. To his correction it is a privilege to submit. Heb. 12: 9; Micah 7: 9.

(5.) An interest in all the *precious promises* which are recorded for their encouragement and support under all circumstances.

(6.) *Free access* to him at all times. Heb. 10 : 19–22 ; 4 : 16 ; Eph. 2 : 18.

(7.) *A title to an eternal inheritance.* “Fear not, little flock,” etc. They are “born to an inheritance incorruptible,” etc. 1 Pet. 1 : 4 ; Rom. 8 : 17. As children, they are interested in the parental estate ; in their present state of minority, they desire and expect it, and are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation.

II. THE EVIDENCES OF ADOPTION.

1. The manifestation of the *spirit and temper of his children.*

His “sons and daughters” should resemble him. They must have not only the name, but the nature of children. And though, like children in one family, there may be much difference in their *natural* tempers, yet through grace, they have habitually all the graces of the Christian temper, though not perfectly, as shall be the case in heaven.

2. *Submission to all the Divine arrangements.* Conviction that they are wise, though sometimes inscrutable ; and that they are intended to promote their present and everlasting good.

3. *Confidence in God alone.* The committing of the soul to him, and all its affairs ; all our temporal concerns to his management ; application to the Divine Parent in every trial, for direction, support.

When a child is adopted, he relinquishes the object of his past confidence, and submits himself to the will and pleasure of the adopter. Hosea 14 : 8 ; Isa. 26 : 18.

4. *Love to God*, and adoring gratitude for all the blessings of adoption. They love God as their Almighty Father, for what he has done for them—is doing—and will do. They love him above every other object. “Whom have I in heaven but thee ?” etc.—Also, love to all the members of his family.

5. *Cheerful obedience.* Love prompts to obedience. In civil adoption the child was expected to obey the laws of the family ; so believers prove their adoption. John 15 : 14 ; 1 John 2 : 4, 5.

6. Patient, yet joyful *expectation of the inheritance.* In civil adoption, an inheritance is not always certain ; but in spiritual adoption it is. Rom. 2 : 7 ; 2 Cor. 4 : 18 ; Rom. 6 : 23 ; Heb. 11 ; 26, 27.

APPLICATION.

1. Admire the love of God as displayed in this privilege. “Behold.” 1 John 3 : 1.

2. See the folly of attempting to separate what God has joined together. Privilege and duty are inseparably connected together in the Divine administration.

3. To what family do we belong ?

LXXVI.—THE NOBLE CONDUCT OF THE BEREANS.

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so." — ACTS 17 : 11.

It is a great blessing to have the Scriptures.——It is very interesting to trace the progress of the Gospel as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. Here we see genuine Christianity, without the aid of secular power, extending its benign influence all around.——It is true that it encountered much opposition; but still the Gospel had free course, etc. It was successful at Thessalonica to some extent; but more especially so at Berea. From the former place the Apostles were driven by the unbelieving Jews, v. 5. The Apostles were then conducted by the Thessalonian believers to Berea, where they were well received. The Bereans heard their message with calm, discriminating, and unprejudiced attention. The consequence was their reception of the Gospel, and saving faith in Christ, v. 12.

I. THE CHARACTER AND CONDUCT OF THE BEREANS.

1. The Gospel was *preached to them* by Paul and Silas; "For how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" That Gospel, and that manner of preaching it, as described, v. 2, 3. The Gospel must be exhibited as that which man *absolutely needs*, and it must be preached as true, bearing the impress of heaven.

2. The *courteous deportment* of the Bereans was favorable to the influence of the Gospel preached. "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica;" were of a better race, extraction, or birth, than those at Thessalonica.

The Jews at Berea had been educated in the same prejudices, yet the conduct of the two forms a striking contrast. The Thessalonian Jews were filled with bigotry, intolerance, and aversion to truth; they shut their ears against it; they banished the Apostles from their city, and pursued them with persecuting bigotry, even to Berea, v. 13.

But the Bereans were "more noble," or "better born," having a better and more agreeable organization of mind; they manifested a more dignified deportment. They possessed a more ingenuous, candid, liberal, and teachable disposition than those at Thessalonica, and were more deserving of the honorable distinction of "Abraham's seed."——"We have Abraham to our father," boasted the Jews, yet they of Thessalonica did not the works of Abraham.

Observe, the word refers more to their *conduct*, as a proof of their better disposition than to their birth, or any peculiar lineal nobility. It was a maxim among the Jews that "none was of a noble spirit who did not employ himself in the study of the law." The Bereans manifested this nobility, for

(1.) They *heard the Gospel attentively*, and in this they differed from the Thessalonians.

They permitted the Apostles to preach. They heard them with respect. The Thessalonians would have consulted their prejudices, and shut their ears against them. The Bereans gave them a fair hearing, without passion or partiality.

(2.) They manifested *a laudable spirit of inquiry* in reference to the truths of Christianity,

They probably had heard of Christianity—it was placed in juxtaposition with Judaism—it was extending—it was bidding fair to supplant Judaism—it was attended by miraculous agency. It therefore demanded their inquiry, and was worthy of it. They were anxious to understand it, and were willing to investigate its claims. They were “more noble.”

(3.) They *received the word with all readiness of mind*. They were glad to have it preached to them. If Christianity was a better system, they would willingly part with Judaism.

When the evidence of its truth appeared to them sufficiently convincing, they had too much dignity of mind to refuse their assent, and too much ingenuousness to conceal their approbation.—They did not quarrel with the word, nor find fault, nor criticise censoriously the preachers of it; but approved of all that was said. They received the word with joy. It became glad tidings to them; for they, by the teaching of the Spirit, readily apprehended its joyful import. Hence they were “more noble” than, etc.

(4.) Their acknowledgment and reception of the truth was *the result of diligent investigation*. “They searched the Scriptures daily,” etc. They did not take things upon trust, or “swallow them upon an implicit faith.” As the Apostle reasoned out of the Scriptures, and referred them to the Old Testament to corroborate the truth of his statements, they had recourse to their Bibles, to see *whether those things* were so.

Searched them *daily*—the subject to them was so important.

They manifested great deference to the authority of the Sacred Writings; were convinced of their inspiration, and in them they expected to find the principles of true religion. Hence they read and compared, in order to see whether the promises and types corresponded with the alleged fulfilment in the person, works, and sufferings of Jesus Christ.—They examined the doctrines to see if they were reasonable and of God.—Observe

The Gospel will bear scrutiny and examination. One part corresponds with another part. The New Testament does not contradict the Old, etc. It is a key to the Old. Their correspondence in type and antitype, in prophecy and fulfilment, is a proof of the Divinity of the Gospel.

(5.) They “*believed*.” They found the Gospel to be true. But it was not mere credence. Many credit the truths of the Gospel, yet they do not savingly believe. They reposed their souls, as guilty sinners, upon the mediation of Christ, the grand fundamental doctrine of the Gospel.—They believed, and were saved from the

guilt and condemnation of sin.—They believed and followed Christ—engaged in his service, etc.

II. THE CONDUCT OF THE BEREANS IS WORTHY OF IMITATION.

1. The word of God is *true*, and therefore *claims our attention*.

If it were the mere invention of man, the promulgation of priestcraft, it would not be worthy of regard. But as it is inspired, as proved by abundant evidence, it must be recognized as the infallible Directory of the Church.

2. We are *deeply interested in the doctrines and precepts* of which the word of God is the Repository. These solemn truths concern all men. They are not confined to ministers.

"Whether *those things* were so." The fall of man—his depravity—his condemnation by the law—his helplessness—the mission of Christ, his divinity, his humanity, sacrifice, death, resurrection, ascension, intercession—his supremacy in the Church—his second advent—the joy of heaven, and the terrors of hell—repentance, faith, love, the Spirit, etc.—these are things which deeply concern us. As men, as sinners, as inhabitants of this world, and as heirs of immortality, we have an awful interest in the truths announced by the voice which speaks to us from heaven.

3. In order to understand these things aright, we must *search the Scriptures* as the Bereans did.

So Christ commanded, John 5 : 39. "Eternal life" through Christ, that is the pearl we must search for in the mine of salvation. "What must I do to be saved?" For the solution of this weighty question we are to search the Scriptures. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The Bible, the infallible directory, prescribes all thy duty; it is a lamp unto thy path, and a light unto thy feet.—As the traveller consults his map, and the mariner his chart, so consult thou the word of God to guide thee in a way thou knowest not.

Search them *daily*. Not only in the synagogue on the Sabbath day, but every day, as opportunity may permit.

In matters of faith and practice, *search them only*.

Search them in preference to the writings of Fathers, or synods, or councils, or Acts of Parliament. "To the law and to the testimony," etc.—The great Chillingworth observes, —

"The Bible, I say, the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants. I cannot find any rest for the sole of my foot but upon this rock only. I see plainly that there are popes against popes, councils against councils, some fathers against others, the same fathers against themselves, a consent of fathers of one age against a consent of fathers of another age, the Church of one age against the Church of another age. Traditionary interpretations of Scriptures are pretended, but there are few or none to be found. No tradition but only of Scripture can derive itself from the fountain, but may be plainly proved either to have been brought in at such an age after Christ, or that in such age it was not in. In a word, there is no sufficient certainty, but of Scripture only, for any considering man to build upon."

Search the Scriptures as the Bereans did. They were "more noble." Guard against the illiberal conduct of the Thessalonians. Avoid a capacious, envious, and persecuting spirit. Cultivate the more noble spirit of the Bereans. Take the Scriptures as the test of truth. Compare what you hear with them. Weigh every sentiment in the balance of the sanctuary. "Beloved, believe not every spirit." 1 John 4.

Search the Scriptures with *fervent prayer*. The rules which many give for the study of the Bible often overlook one grand requisite, viz., that as it required supernatural aid to write it, so it does also to understand it. You must have the aid of the Spirit, or you open the word of God in vain. "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life."

III. CONSIDER THE ADVANTAGES OF FOLLOWING THE EXAMPLE OF THE BEREANS.

1. We shall obtain accurate information respecting the doctrines of revealed truth, and realize a saving interest in them.

2. We shall receive ample instruction as to the performance of all personal, social, and religious duties.

3. We shall derive strong consolation under the difficulties and afflictions of life, and it will be the source of comfort and hope in death.—The Bereans believed—that influenced all their life.—They believed, and for 1800 years have enjoyed the bliss of heaven. No longer see through a glass darkly.

The Advantages are everlasting.

APPLICATION.

1. See, from what has been said, who are the *most noble* and honorable. Not the rich, the great of this world, but those who resemble the Bereans. Those who search the Scriptures daily, have their minds filled with noble thoughts, fixed to noble principles, and formed for noble actions.—Compare them with ignoble sinners.

2. Be thankful for the Scriptures, and for the free and uninterrupted use of them. Popery would snatch the Bible from your hand, if it could regain its former power.

3. Here we have a criterion by which we may judge how far we have been savingly benefited by the preaching of the Gospel. Have we received it with all readiness of mind?

LXXVII. — THE HAPPY PEOPLE.

"Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread upon their high places."—Deut. 33 : 29.

THE lips of the dying often utter the most weighty and interesting truths. The expressions of a dying man, and especially of a dying Christian, have frequently made a deep and lasting impression.——

Moses was ordered to ascend Mount Nebo to die.—Before his death, he blessed the twelve tribes of Israel — and at the close of this chapter he describes the happiness of the Israelites, v. 26–29.—The conduct of Moses, in blessing the tribes, etc., very much resembles the conduct of the Prophet like unto Moses, who prayed for, and advised his disciples the evening before his crucifixion.

The language of the text is descriptive of the INCOMPARABLE HAPPINESS OF GOD'S PEOPLE. As the children of Israel were a chosen nation, and distinguished in many respects from all the nations of the earth, so the people of God are distinguished from the wicked, by the work of grace on their hearts, by the love and care of the Almighty, and by the hope of glory which inspires their breasts.

The various particulars in the text, so descriptive of the happiness of the Israelites, are applicable to God's people now. Consider, then,

I. *They were happy in THEIR NAME.* Denominated "Israel." This name implies, "A prince with God, or prevailing with God." It was given to Jacob. Gen. 32 : 30. It is applied to the whole of his descendants; and it is frequently used for the universal Church, who are the true Israel of God, Isa. 45 : 17, 25; Rom. 9 : 6; 11 : 16; Gal. 6 : 16. Such a name implies, —

1. That God has *chosen and prepared* them to be his people. This is an infinite honor.

2. He has privileged them with *communion with himself*. Through Christ they can *prevail* with God to grant them the blessings they require. See John 14 : 13; 15 : 16.

II. *They were happy as A SAVED PEOPLE.* "O people saved by the Lord." They were delivered from the bondage of Egypt by Divine power — they were saved from famine in the wilderness. Great indeed was their salvation as a nation. "He gave Egypt for their ransom," and threw all their hosts into the Red Sea.

God gave his only-begotten Son for the ransom of his people. John 3 : 16. He has delivered them from Satan's yoke and dominion — he has turned away from them the curse, and delivered them from the wrath to come. They now rejoice in the pardon of sin, etc. etc.

They are a saved people, and invested with all the privileges of God's people.

"Saved of the Lord." This they feel—are saved by grace, etc.—Taking no merit to themselves they say, "God forbid." Gal. 6 : 14.

III. *They were happy in being DIVINELY HELPED* in every time of need.

Look back at the context:—"Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days so shall thy strength be." v. 25, and v. 26–28. These declarations, combined with the text, imply the following, —

1. *Divine protection.* "Shield of thy help." All his attributes, if

requisite, shall be employed to protect the redeemed. They, like a shield, shall preserve the righteous from danger. "Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield," Gen. 15: 1; Ps. 84: 11; "If God be for us," etc.

2. *Divine security.* "The eternal God is thy refuge," v. 27. Was not this verified, again and again, as they passed through the wilderness? How important is the harbor of refuge to the storm-tossed mariner! How valuable the cities of refuge to the manslayer of old! — But much more valuable is the divine refuge to the Church. In affliction, persecution, temptation, when assailed by fears, the "name of the Lord is a strong tower," etc. "God is their hiding-place," Ps. 116: 7; 82: 7. — The everlasting arms shall support the Church that it shall not sink. Underneath the Church is the Rock of Ages, Matt. 16: 18. In trouble believers may often be, yet "everlasting arms" are underneath them to bear up their spirits, even when they are pressed above measure. The everlasting covenant, and the everlasting consolations that flow from it, are indeed everlasting arms, with which believers have been sustained and kept cheerful in the worst of times.

3. The conduct of Divine Providence in the *supply of their wants.* v. 28. Their bread and their water shall be sure. If God cared for his people then, so as to provide them with temporal abundance in Canaan, will he not also supply the bodily wants of his people now? See Matt. 6: 24, etc.

4. *Strength and equipment for warfare.* "Thy shoes," etc. The way may be rough, hard, and difficult; but the strength to be imparted to thy soul by my Spirit, will enable thee to surmount all. "Thy feet shall be shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace." Eph. 3: 16.

IV. *Happy in the prospect of a COMPLETE CONQUEST OVER ALL THEIR ENEMIES.* "Who is the sword of thine excellency, and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee."

With an excellent *sword* God arms his people. It is called "the sword of the Spirit," Eph. 6: 17, because it comes from the Spirit, and receives its fulfilment in the soul through the operation of the Spirit. An ability to use this on necessary occasions, as in times of temptation and trial, cannot fail to repulse the enemy. "The word of God is quick," Heb. 4: 12. This word penetrates deeper into the soul than any sword; it destroys the love of sin, and effectually resists sin, the world, and Satan. With this sword Christ defeated the Evil One. "It is written," Matt. 4: 7.

"The sword of thine excellency." God is the strength and author of all their victories. He makes them to excel, and gloriously conquer and triumph over their enemies. How excellent does the Christian appear when, by the use of this sword, he escapes the pollutions of the world,—when he rises superior to it,—when by it he slays his enemies! How excellent does he appear in a dying hour! How excellent at the day of judgment! "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor." Rev. 2: 7, 17; 3: 5.

"Thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee." Who said thou shouldst never be able to gain possession of the good land; but I will conduct thee there, to their utter disappointment and dismay.

"Thou shalt tread upon their high places," their towers, their fortresses, their cities, though strongly fortified, and apparently impregnable.

And, Christian, has not thy fearful heart often told thee that thou shouldst utterly fail? Has not Satan suggested to thy mind that thou wast under delusion, and wouldst be rejected at last? Have not persecutors mocked and taunted thee, traduced thy character, misrepresented thy motives, called thee enthusiast, fanatic, etc.? Have not infidels assailed thy faith? O Christian, fear not! "The triumphing of the wicked is short." Thou shalt overcome. And when at the last day they see thee accepted by Him whose smile is heaven, and whose frown is death, they will say to the mountains, Fall on us, etc.—When they see thee glorified, they will be found liars unto thee.

V. Happy in their **ULTIMATE ARRIVAL IN THE LAND OF CANAAN.** They passed through the wilderness—Canaan was enjoyed. The promise was fulfilled. They trod upon their high places—God thrust out the enemy before them, v. 27.

God will guide his people in a right path to the city of habitation.—He will "guide them by his counsel, and afterwards receive them to glory." By and by, he will say, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." "Come, ye blessed." And O what a kingdom is that! What a vast, glorious, rich inheritance! "Eye hath not seen."

APPLICATION.

1. Such is the happiness of God's Israel. It is ineffable, inconceivable. "Who is like unto thee?" O incomparable people! Talk not of the wealth of empires, or crowns of kings.

2. How destitute and miserable is the state of sinners!

3. Pray to be made Israelites indeed. God can take thee out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and engraft thee into Christ the good olive tree, that thou mayst partake of the sap and fatness of the root.

LXXVIII.—NEGLECT OF THE GREAT SALVATION.

"How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation."—HEB. 2 : 3.

SALVATION is the most important subject that can ever engage the intellectual power of men or angels. Because it is absolutely necessary for us as fallen, helpless transgressors—because it is the source of spiritual relief to our deathless spirits, and the fountain of the most refined and exalted enjoyment which we can realize on earth; because it is the mighty lever to exalt us from the degradation and misery of vice here, to the perfect purity and triumphant felicity of heaven forever—because these are its qualities and effects, it is worthy of the homage of the world, and of the adorations of eternity.

The Apostle, in the context, argues that if the Gospel of salvation contains so much Divinity and glory, and is productive of such infinite results, it ought to be gratefully received, v. 1-2. Notice,

I. THE GREAT SALVATION: 1. Its Nature. 2. Its Greatness.

1. *The nature of Salvation.* The term applies, especially here, to the whole economy of grace—the dispensation of mercy to a fallen and ruined world, by the mission of the Son of God to this earth. Hence he is frequently called the Saviour of the world—the Light of the world—and the Life of the world. “For the Son of man is come to seek,” etc. “This is a faithful saying.” The Scriptures throughout denominate him the Saviour. And this denomination implies two great facts:—

(1.) The *Perilous condition* of man as a sinner. Salvation means *deliverance*, and deliverance implies *danger*. Not human peril—not physical pain and anguish merely—not worldly catastrophes. No! but the misery, defilement, condemnation, bondage, and everlasting ruin of the soul.

Sin has darkened the mind, perverted the judgment—debased the passions, and turned the soul from God. Sin is rebellion—the transgression of the law—a daring trespass upon Divine authority, and a provoking insult to Heaven. Sin is a barrier to fellowship with God—it provokes him to anger—it causes him to denounce his curse. Yes, man is *curst*. For is not God his Sovereign? The Lawgiver demands satisfaction. If not given, then will he render “tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil.”

We talk of human perils—of earthly dangers; but alas! no earthly woe can be compared to this. What is the shipwreck of the body compared to sin's devastation of the soul, and its liability to be engulfed in endless perdition?—What are earthly losses by injustice, insolvency—by conflagrations and other causes, compared with the loss of the soul? What are bodily diseases, however complicated and excruciating, compared with the diseases of the soul, produced there by sin?—What are penal enactments, sufferings by imprisonments, torture, etc., compared with the infliction of the *Curse of the Law*? Man, while an earthly resident, has to contend with human dangers merely, but the sinful and ruined soul is destined, if not saved by Sovereign grace, to contend with eternal storms of Divine wrath. Rom. 2 : 8, 9; Gal. 3 : 10; Matt. 25 : 41, 46.

(2.) *Deliverance by the Mediation of the Son of God.* As the Saviour he was Divinely ordained, appointed, and duly qualified.—His mission beautifully represented, Rom. 8 : 3, 4.

In nature he became allied to the transgressor. He assumed our nature with all its miseries and infirmities, with the exception of sin, Gal. 4 : 4; Heb. 2 : 14, 15.

He lived a life of strict conformity to the law, Heb. 7 : 26-28.

He endured the penalty of transgression. Isa. 53 : 4-6; Rom. 3 : 25, 25; Gal. 3 : 13.

He rose again to confirm the reality of his offering—and ascended to heaven to live, and intercede, and reign for the benefit of his Church.

2. *Its Greatness.* "So great salvation." An indefinite expression, like "God so loved," etc.

It is a greater salvation than the deliverance of Israel from the bondage of Egypt—than the deliverance of Lot from Sodom—than the deliverance of Daniel and the three Hebrew children from the fiery furnace. In these cases the *body* was delivered—but here the *soul* is saved. They were saved from earthly dangers; but "Jesus delivered us from the wrath to come."

It is a great Salvation if we consider,

(1.) *Its Author.* Its Author is God Almighty, all-wise, infinitely good, holy, and eternal. The Self-Existent and Independent God. The Creator, not only of this orb which we inhabit, but of innumerable stars, and suns, and planets, occupying boundless space. The same wisdom, omnipotence, and love that contrived and called all these into existence, designed and executed our salvation. — Therefore it must be great—like himself—worthy of his nature and attributes—a *great salvation!*

(2.) *The Agent employed to effect it.* The Son of God—the only begotten Son of God. His incomparable glory declared, Phil. 2 : 6; Heb. 1 : 3. He is superior to angels. Heb. 1 : 4-8, 13. Superior to Moses, Heb. 3 : 3. Superior to the ancient priesthood, etc. The Agent of this salvation as employed by God is infinitely more glorious than any created intelligence.

(3.) *The price which the Agent paid.* It was a great price. Not silver and gold. Not the cattle upon a thousand hills. Not the topaz of Ethiopia—not the first-born, or the fruit of the body for the sin of the soul. Not cities, or nations, and kingdoms, or planets, or stars, and suns,—but *the precious blood of Christ*, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. A victim so pure and impeccable, could only be found in Christ.

And to secure salvation, the Son of the highest travelled in sorrow on this vile orb—endured anguish—an agony which made him sweat great drops of blood falling to the ground—and a death ignominious, unparalleled, and incomprehensible. "He spared not his own Son." It must therefore be a great salvation.

(4.) *The magnitude of the evils* from which Christ saves, proves it to be a great salvation.

Guilt—impurity—darkness—misery—hell. ——— A deliverance from these evils is more valuable than the life-boat sent out to save perishing mariners—than the most valuable medicinal specific to heal the plague, to arrest the progress of the epidemic—more valuable than the interposition of a friend to save you from insolvency, embarrassment, and ruin—more valuable than the pardon of a sovereign to the prisoner of death in his cell.

(5.) *The various and invaluable blessings* with which it invests its recipients. Pardon of sin—freedom from condemnation—peace—joy—communion with God, etc. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." "Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." "Oh," said one of the Malabar converts appointed by the Danish Missionaries to translate a catechism, in which believers are called "sons" of God,— "Oh it is too

much ! let me rather render it, 'they shall be permitted to kiss his feet!' " But no, it is too much. "It is just like him," said a converted negro woman, with sublime moral simplicity, when speaking of his unutterable gift of Christ for our salvation. He gives all spiritual blessings—all the exalted privileges of the Gospel—the ministration of angels, victory over death, and it is *just like him*. He gives us heaven, an eternal inheritance there, and it is *just like him*, for *God is love*.

(6.) The *great number of beings* for whom it is provided. It is a banquet amply provided with entertainment for all who will come. It is the river of the water of life for all who thirst, etc.

And that banquet of grace—that river of life is perfectly free. Isa. 55 : 1, 2.

Lastly, it is a great salvation, because *its effects are eternal*. John 4 : 14 ; 2 Tim. 2 : 10.

II. THIS GREAT SALVATION IS NEGLECTED.

Look around, and you will see multitudes caring nothing about that which is so great and interesting to angels, and enrapturing to heaven.

They neglect that which is more necessary for their happiness than their food, etc. etc.

Some wilfully neglect it. The infidel denies it altogether—the self-righteous, through the influence of pride, will not embrace the Saviour.—The worldly-minded have to attend to secular things, and they are overwhelmed with earthly cares, laboring to accumulate fleeting treasures to the neglect of eternal riches.—The lovers of pleasure neglect it. It has no charms, no pleasures for them. They are deluded by a thousand phantoms floating around them, and are grasping at bubbles in preference to the pearl of great price, and the crown of glory that fadeth not away. They are under the dominion of sin, which blinds their minds, and deceives their hearts. In short, sin is a Proteus, changing itself into a thousand shapes, or a serpent twisting itself a thousand ways, to slide into men's hearts, in order to prevent their thinking about their own salvation.

Some wish to neglect it only for a season. They perceive its necessity and great value, and promise themselves that at some future time they will embrace it. Awful infatuation !

Remember that while this salvation is neglected, the soul is suspended over the pit of woe, and if the thread of life break, etc.

III. THE NEGLECTERS OF THIS SALVATION CANNOT ESCAPE THE VINDICTION OF HEAVEN.

The question "How?" is equal to the strongest affirmation. *You shall not escape*. To hope for an escape is absurd. To effect it is impossible. The greater the salvation, the more bitter and agonizing will be the punishment of those who neglect it.

That they cannot escape, observe,

1. They are already *under condemnation*, under arrest, in the hands of Divine justice, and they cannot escape, except by the Sacrifice of Christ.

2. To neglect this salvation exposes the soul to a *greater punishment* than that inflicted under the law. The neglecters of that law did not escape, ver. 2. This is a superior dispensation. "He that believeth not shall be damned," — "shall never see life," but "the wrath of God abideth on him."

Such are the declarations of God. It is evident then that the neglecters cannot escape. "*How shall they escape,*" etc.

You cannot escape by dependence upon the *mere mercy of God*. A God all mercy would be a God unjust. Besides, Christ said, "He that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me."

You cannot escape by *morality*; for this sets aside the atonement, and he that despised Moses' law, etc. Heb. 10 : 28, 29 ; 12 : 25.

You cannot escape by *flight*; for God is everywhere.

You cannot escape by *resistance*; for who has an arm like God, and who can thunder with a voice like him ?

You cannot escape, for *God is true* and faithful to his threatenings, as well as to his promises. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven," etc. 2 Thess. 1 : 7, 8.

You cannot escape, after *you have suffered awhile, by universal restoration*. The consequence of your neglect will be everlasting.

You can only escape by embracing the Lord Jesus Christ. Do it immediately. Delay not.

If you lose an interest in this great salvation, the fault will be your own.

LXXIX.—THE DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." — NUM. 23 : 10.

THESE words were uttered by Balaam, who was hired by the King of Moab to curse the children of Israel; but this God prevented.

The death of a righteous person is a spectacle truly sublime, when he is blessed with the calm exercise of his reasoning powers, and strong faith in Christ. Then he appears elevated above the world, and all terrestrial objects—assimilated to the purity and grandeur of God, and detached from mortality. Amid physical pain he catches a glimpse of heaven, and begins to breathe its spirit. It is true that nature clings to friends and relatives, but the approaching glories of Paradise, the beckonings of cherubim and seraphim, and of his brethren in Christ who have gone before him, check his tears, and cause him to long for dissolution. — Hence the wish of such men as Balaam. "Let me die."

I. THE DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

1. It is a death *preceded by righteousness of heart and life*. All are unrighteous by nature, Rom. 3 : 10, etc. But all who believe in

Christ, are renewed in the spirit of their minds—justified and made righteous by faith in the Redeemer. This righteousness, or holiness, is visible in the life and conduct.

2. *The righteous must die as well as the wicked.* There have been only two exceptions to death, Enoch and Elijah. But the most pre-eminent piety cannot repulse death. Besides death to the Christian is the road, the portal, to endless bliss.

3. *The death of the righteous is a happy death.*

Their death is not only more desirable than the death of others, but even more desirable than life itself, for in that sense Balaam's wish may be taken. "Not only when I do die, let me die the death of the righteous, etc., but I could even now be willing to die on condition that I might die the death of the righteous, and reach my end this moment, provided it might be like his."

They are happy in death,

(1.) Because *they are righteous*.—The death of any other character would be an object of misery. —The righteous die having their sins pardoned—free from condemnation—having the witness of the Spirit. They die in the love of God—in the faith of Christ—in union with the Church—in the service of God—in peace with all mankind.

(2.) It is attended by *the presence and consolations of God*. "Thou art with me." Ps. 23 : 4. The Spirit then applies the promises; it irradiates the mind.

(3.) It is a death *attended by the ministration of angels*. Thus they attended even the beggar Lazarus. Heb. 1 : 14.

(4.) It is a *precious death*. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Ps. 116 : 15. Their death glorifies him. It shows the power of his grace.

(5.) It is often attended with *brilliant hope*. "The righteous hath hope in his death." It is crowned with *complete triumph*. "Thanks unto God who hath given us the victory."

II. THAT THE DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS IS HIGHLY DESIRABLE.

It is an object of desire both to the righteous and the wicked.

1. On account of *its blessedness*, as just stated.—Compare such a death with the death of the wicked—the Pharisee, the formalist, the sensualist, the drunkard, the covetous, the infidel.

2. On account of the *consequences of death*.

To the righteous, they are sublime, happy, and eternal.

To them death is a release from all sin—from all afflictions—from corporeal pain—from conflict with spiritual foes—it is gain, great and inconceivable gain—the gain of superior light, enjoyment, pleasure, honor.—

Such will be the consequences of the death of the righteous, or "last end." Balaam believed in the soul's immortality; it was anciently known and believed. For how could the death of the good be more desirable than the death of the wicked on any other account than as it

involved their happiness in another world, since in the manner and circumstances of dying we see all things come alike to all.

To the wicked, death is only the beginning of sorrows. Sometimes great mental anguish—dreadful forbodings. Death takes them from their *good things* here to *evil things* yonder.

3. The wicked frequently desire such a death. When afflicted, near death, when conscience tells them they are unprepared—when they tremble at future wrath—when they witness dying scenes. Their consciences give a verdict in favor of Christianity. “Let me die,” etc.

III. THE FOLLY AND DANGER OF WISHING TO DIE THE DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS WITHOUT ADOPTING THE MEANS TO ACCOMPLISH IT.

1. It is *inconsistent*. We act not so in worldly matters.

2. It will *avail nothing*.

Balaam's opinion of religion was better than his resolution. There are many who desire to die the death of the righteous, but do not strive to live the life of the righteous. Gladly would they have their *end* like his, but not his *way*. They would be saints in heaven, but not saints on earth. “This is the desire of the slothful which kills him, because his hands refuse to labor.” —

It is only a wish, not a prayer to God; a vain wish, being only a wish for the end without any care for the means.

3. It is cruel—soul-murder—eternally ruinous. It will aggravate condemnation. “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?”

APPLICATION.

1. Ample means are provided by the Gospel to prepare us for the death of the righteous.

2. Do not merely wish, but pray to God for his Spirit and grace, that you may die the death of the righteous.

3. What will be the character of my death? What will be my end? Full of hope and triumph? or clouded with woe? Sinner, you will soon come to your last end. There will soon be an end to your earthly pleasures, etc. etc.

LXXX.—THE PRESENCE OF GOD WITH THE AFFLICTED.

“When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee: and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned: neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.” — ISA. 43 : 2.

THE history of God's people in every age is most interesting and instructive. In that history we specially see the manifestations of Divine

love to them. His providence has ever guarded and sustained them; his bounty has ever supplied all their wants: his grace has ever been sufficient to save them from the effects and power of sin; his mercy has ever been imparted to forgive their transgressions; and his consolations have ever abounded to comfort them in all tribulation. However dark and perilous the condition of his people, God has ever been present to supply all their need, to sustain them, or to deliver them from every danger. — The compassion of God was very conspicuous in his dealings with the Israelites. Their perversity is described in the preceding chapter. — This chapter opens with promises of God's immutable love. —

I. THAT GOD'S PEOPLE ARE FREQUENTLY SUBJECT TO PAINFUL CONFLICTS.

This is indicated by the terms used; waters, rivers, fire. If understood literally, it implies danger, and Divine preservation. Isa. 8: 7-10; Ps. 66: 12. If understood figuratively, it is very expressive. Ps. 69: 1. Hence we read of "fiery trials," and the "fiery darts of the wicked One."

Observe,

1. No believer can calculate upon *exemption from affliction*. — Relationship to God, holiness of life, elevation of the mind above carnality, will not exempt the Church from trials, because these trials promote and maintain that spirituality.

The most of general rules have exceptions, but this is even an exception to all general rules, for it is a general rule without an exception. — All believers acknowledge, "Many are the afflictions." Ps. 34: 19. It is "through much tribulation," etc.

2. All believers *need* affliction. It must be so, for the God of infinite love and wisdom appoints them, and his judgment can never err. — See Heb. 12: 6, etc.

Saints are the children of God, but they need correction and discipline, etc. — The precious seed requires the use of the fan to blow away the chaff. So do saints. The gold requires the furnace to purge away the dross. Saints are the gold which belongs to the King of the Church, and he places his gold in the furnace of affliction to purge away the dross of sin. — The patient requires medicine to restore to health; and God afflicts his people to restore them to spiritual health. "Before I was afflicted I," etc.

Afflictions are needful to wean us from earth — to induce us to aspire after heaven.

3. Afflictions are *Divinely appointed*. 1 Thess. 3: 3, 4; Job 5: 6, 7. And if he appoints them he superintends their operation.

Satan and wicked men have a sinful hand in many of the afflictions of the righteous; but God has a superintending, overruling, and gracious hand. Without his permissive hand, they would never take place; without his restraining hand they would be overwhelming; without his supporting hand, they would be intolerable; and without his sanctifying hand, they would never be blessed.

4. These afflictions are *peculiar in their quality*.

This is indicated by the figures in the text, *waters, rivers, fire, and flame*, denoting their number, severity, and influence.

(1.) Their *number*. "Waters," "rivers," are in the plural number. "*Many* are the afflictions of the righteous." "Born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." Even as sparks are numerous and have a tendency to fly upward, so man is liable to numerous afflictions, and happy will it be if they bear his soul on high.

They are numerous;—arising from bodily disease, both personal and relative: arising from poverty; refractory children; the infidelity of men; worldly losses, severe bereavements, etc. etc., but who can enumerate them? Their name is "Legion," they are many.

The righteous have more afflictions than the wicked have. Read Ps. 73. In addition to the ordinary afflictions inseparable from humanity, they have to endure those arising from the profession of Christ, and the work of Grace in the soul.

(2.) Their *Severity*. "Waters," deep waters, "rivers," "fire, and flame." Like water, or a river, the tendency of affliction is to distress and overwhelm. Like fire they are severe, painful, and destructive—destructive to sin. At first they may resemble a little cloud in the sky; by and by it overspreads the firmament with darkness, gloom, and tempest. Afflictions which at first were like a little brook, have by and by swelled into an overflowing river, breaking over its banks on the right hand and on the left. The lives of Job, David, and Paul, illustrate this fact.

(3.) Their *beneficial influence*. Water cleanses; fire purifies. Their natures are different, but their purifying effects are the same. "The fathers of our flesh chasten us after their own pleasure, but he for our profit," etc. Heb. 12 : 10.

Fire and water have been employed as the instruments of Divine indignation, but their influence upon the righteous will be beneficial. As water cleanses the body from defilement, so afflictions tend to the cleansing of the soul. As fire separates the dross from the pure metal, afflictions separate the corruptions of the flesh from the graces of the Spirit. Fiery trials make golden Christians. Sanctified afflictions are spiritual promotions.

Bitter may be the cup of affliction, yet it is needful and salutary. The most deadly poison is often the most sweet, and the most salubrious herbs the most bitter. As bitter herbs are often the most medicinal, the bitter herbs of affliction are the most medicinal to the soul.

Great is the fame of these healing herbs. They have calmed the restless spirit, and produced submission to the Divine will. — They have weaned from the world — elevated the mind to heaven — led to prayer, sweet communion, holy diligence, and conformity to God. — Afflictions are a rod. Painful in its infliction; but it is like Aaron's rod that budded; precious are the fruits it bears, even "the peaceable fruits of righteousness to those that are exercised thereby."

"How happy is it for me that the world often gives me the slip, that I may forsake the world, and look out more for the better country; — That men often prove false to me, that I may rely only on the God of truth: — That wants beset me on every

side, that I by faith may set myself down at the gate of heaven, and, in the promise and in his fulness, find a rich supply; — That death now and then cuts off a relative, that I may more remember mine own end, the immortal world, and him who is the resurrection and the life. Affliction renders the creature tasteless, the world barren, and dispels the intoxicating juices of carnal pleasures and sensual delights. It breaks the sleep of security, and awakens and rouses up to duties. Even the saints themselves are more frequent and fervent in their devotions under the rod of affliction; and many in trouble visit the throne of grace (dear throne! to which all have access), and pour a prayer when his chastening hand is upon them, who before were utter strangers both to the place and the employment." — *Meikle*.

III. THAT GOD'S PEOPLE ARE DIVINELY SUPPORTED IN THEIR AFFLICTIONS. "I will be with thee," etc.

He was present with Israel, going before them in a pillar of cloud by day, etc.—with the three Hebrew children—with Daniel—with the Apostles, martyrs, etc. He still says, "My presence." Ex. 33 : 14. "I will never leave thee."

It is his *gracious presence*, enjoyed in communion with him, the operations of his Spirit — the promises of his word.

1. He is present *to sympathize* with them. "A brother born for adversity;" a "friend that sticketh closer than a brother." His compassion is expressed by the sacred writers, by allusion to the pity of a father, and the love of a mother. "Like as a father," etc. "As one whom his mother comforteth," etc. Isa. 66 : 13. How cheering is the sympathy of a friend in the hour of sickness — even the very servants seem to minister comfort; but O the sympathy of the great High Priest who is touched, etc.

2. He is present *to comfort and support* them. He is called "the God of comfort." 2 Cor. 1 : 3–5. He comforted Jacob when his bed was the cold ground, his pillow a heap of stones, his covering the canopy of the skies. When the patriarch awoke, he exclaimed, "Surely God is in this place." Should they faint in the hour of trial, he will support by "the right hand of his righteousness." Isa. 41 : 10. He will show himself as the God of infinite love, of wisdom, and truth, and grace. He will show them "his covenant," and make "his grace sufficient" for them.

3. He is present *to set limits to their afflictions*. To the waters of affliction, to the rivers of adversity, to the fire of persecution, and to the flames of man's wrath, he will say, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed;" the infirmities of the sufferer can endure no more — my sanctifying process is accomplished — the dross is gone, and the pure gold appears; therefore retire, ye threatening waters and rivers, be extinguished, ye fires and flames. "He stays his rough wind in the day of his east wind." If he tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, much more to the lambs of his flock.

4. He is present with them *to maintain the exercise of their graces*. Patience, faith, hope, courage. Rom. 5 : 3–4. Without these graces they would sink in despair, but God maintains them in lively exercise.

5. He is present *to preserve them from destruction*. "The rivers shall not overflow thee; thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Diseases shall not end in death till I permit. The wrath of enemies I will restrain. "No weapon formed against

thee shall prosper." Instead of being injured by thy trials thou shalt be benefited. I will turn the curse into a blessing. Did he not preserve Israel from the Egyptians, the Red Sea, and the toils of the wilderness? Did he not preserve Daniel in the lion's den — the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace? See Ps. 91 : 5-7; Luke 21 : 12, 18; 1 Cor. 8 : 13-15; Heb. 11 : 33-38; 1 Pet. 4 : 12, 13.

Lastly. Afflictions are *transient*, and will soon end. 2 Cor. 4 : 17. The end of their mortal life will be the end of all their sorrows. The night of affliction may appear long, — but a morning of joy will follow it, which will be really long, — long as eternity. — How short then that night compared with the day that succeeds it! It is a short night of sorrow before a day of endless singing. At death sin dies, and sorrow expires. Sin is the mother, and sorrow is the daughter: and the mother and daughter die on one bed, and are buried in one grave.

APPLICATION.

- 1st. See the greatness of Christian privileges, and be thankful.
- 2d. In all afflictions plead this promise.
- 3d. Anticipate the heavenly Canaan which will succeed all the trials of the wilderness.

LXXXI. — ACQUAINTANCE WITH GOD.

"Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee." — Job 22 : 21.

THE character of Job was misunderstood by his three friends. Eliphaz unjustly accuses him of guilt, v. 5, 6, and esteems his impiety to be the source of his sorrows. Though the exhortation in the text was not applicable, he not being an impious character, yet it is strictly applicable to the unregenerate, who are "without God in the world." "Acquaint," etc.

I. THE NATURE OF ACQUAINTANCE WITH GOD.

"Acquaintance," implies not mere personal knowledge, but that intimacy and familiarity which subsists between one friend and another. Ps. 55 : 15; 101 : 4.

1st. It implies an affecting truth, viz., that sinners have *no intimacy, no acquaintance with their Creator*. They have lost his favor — lost his image — lost communion with him.

2d. It implies a *knowledge of his character*. As the Creator and Governor of the universe, and as the Benefactor and Preserver of men. As the God of all grace.

3d. The *enjoyment of his favor*. So as to say, "This is my Friend, my Portion." "This God is my God forever and ever," etc. The Divine favor can only be enjoyed by the meditation of Christ, as will be shown shortly.

4th. *Supreme love to him*. "Whom have I in heaven but thee?"

5th. *Constant intercourse with him.* Even as a man has with his friend. "Our fellowship is with the Father," etc.

II. THE MEANS OF ACQUAINTANCE WITH GOD.

1st. *Enlightenment by the Spirit.*

The Spirit reveals to the sinner, his enmity to God, and alienation from him—reveals the medium of his reconciliation to God, the death of Christ. The Spirit breaks down all opposition to God, destroys his carnality, and inclines the heart to God, Rom. 8 : 7 ; 1 Cor. 2 : 14 ; 2 Cor. 4 : 6. The Spirit produces repentance unto life.

2d. *Faith in the sacrifice of Christ.*

He cannot be approached through any other medium. The atonement of Christ cannot be dispensed with. John 14 : 6. Sin is the separator of God and man, Isa. 59 : 2, and the atonement of Christ is the effectual reconciler, 2 Cor. 5 : 21. There must be dependence on Christ, Rom. 8 : 25, 26.

3d. *Believing prayer.* Constant supplications to God through Christ will produce real and precious intimacy with him.

4th. The constant *cherishing of the Spirit's influences.*

5th. The *study of God* in his word, in his house, etc.

6th. By frequent *intercourse with Christians.* In the house of mourning—in the time of trial, etc. You may learn much of God from them—You will see his love, his power, his care, his faithfulness, etc., in their experience.

III. THE SEASON FOR COMMENCING ACQUAINTANCE WITH GOD. "Now."

1st. The present time is the *best.* You are in health—have mental vigor—are free from cares and oppression, which may yet come upon you. Eccles. 12 : 1, 2.

2d. The present time is *claimed* by God himself. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice," etc. etc.

3d. It is *the only time of which you are certain.* "Boast not thyself of to-morrow," etc.

4th. Acquaintance with him now will deliver you from *doubt and dread* as to your *final state.*

IV. THE HAPPY RESULTS OF ACQUAINTANCE WITH GOD.

1st. *Peace.* God is the God of peace, and all his people enjoy it. Christ, as the Prince of peace, left peace as a bequest to his disciples.—Peace with God—no condemnation. Peace with conscience—no accusation. Peace with the will of God—no murmuring, no resisting it.

2d. *Good.* Temporal good. Providential goodness. Spiritual good. The gifts and graces of the Spirit. Divine support in every trial, etc. Heavenly good. Eternal good. This will distinguish the people of God from the character and final state of the wicked.

LXXXII.—THE BELIEVERS' INHERITANCE.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again into a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."—1 PET. 1 : 3-4.

THE mind of Peter was greatly impressed with the preciousness of Christian privileges, and filled with lively emotions of gratitude to their Divine Author. Here he contemplates the heavenly inheritance reserved in heaven for all the saints; and also the work of grace upon the soul, to prepare it for the enjoyment of it.—And surely every Christian ought to be thankful for such rich and distinguishing grace.—When we arrive in heaven and realize the sublime effects of Divine grace in the full enjoyment of celestial bliss, we shall be astonished at our feeble praises and our defective love while sojourners upon earth.—

I. THE OBJECT OF THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE. "An inheritance."

An inheritance signifies an estate whether it comes by succession or donation, Num. 26 : 53, 54. In the text there is an allusion to the land of Canaan, promised to the Israelites as the land they should inherit. It is called an inheritance. Ps. 79 : 1.

Canaan of old was distinguished by many glorious properties. It was to be to the Israelites a *land of rest*. So will heaven be. Canaan was a fertile land—a land of abundance. So will heaven be. It was a land of happiness as compared with the wilderness. So will heaven be.—It was a land freely given them, Deut. 9 : 4-6; Ezek. 36 : 22.—So is the heavenly inheritance.

But the abundance, beauty, and glory of the earthly Canaan are but faint types of the heavenly inheritance. There was no perfect happiness there. Sin and its bitter fruits were there. Afflictions and troubles were there. Sickness and death were there. How different then from the heavenly inheritance, as the following properties of it declare:—

1st. It is *incorruptible*, incapable of decay. Its splendor and glory shall forever abide. It shall be imperishable, immutable, like its great Architect, Heb. 1 : 10-12. It is "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ," the "kingdom that shall never be moved."

2d. It is *undefiled*. The earthly Canaan was defiled by its inhabitants. All the inhabitants of heaven, all its employments, all its enjoyments, are holy. Sin exists not there to contaminate. No Satan tempts there. No evil communications corrupt there. Rev. 21 : 27. God is perfectly holy. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord:" therefore all who see and enjoy him are holy. They are "like him, and they see him as he is." 1 John 3 : 2.

3. It *fadeth not away*. The allusion may be to fading flowers, which exhibit their beauties and yield their fragrance only for a short time, and then perish.

Or the metaphor may be a comparative one, alluding to those flowers that for a long time retain their hue and fragrance. From the *apapavros*, we have our flowers called *amaranths*, because they preserve their hue and odor for a long time. But they ultimately fade and decay.

But this inheritance cannot wither; it is always in bloom. How different from the things of earth! Riches make themselves wings and flee away. The bloom of health, the strength of the body, the enjoyments of life, fade away. All human glory is transient.——In heaven all is characterized by an endless perpetuity. 2 Cor. 4 : 17, 18; 1 Pet. 5 : 4. O blissful prospect! Delightful and soul-thrilling hope! The Christian's crown of amaranth will never be tarnished by time, or annihilated by age.

On the brow of mighty monarchs may sparkle many a gem,
And gold, and pearls, and jewels, may deck the diadem;
But it shines with earthly lustre—it will tarnish and decay,
While the Christian's crown of amaranth will never fade away.

Proud were the mighty conquerors, crowned in Olympic games;
They deemed that deathless honors were entwined around their names:
But ere was soon the parsley wreath, the olive, and the bay,
While the Christian's crown of amaranth will never fade away.

With a harp of angel melody, and a palm branch in his hand,
The saint 'mid circling spirits round the golden throne shall stand;
And his song shall be enduring as heaven's eternal day,
And his victor crown of amaranth shall never fade away.

4. It is *reserved in heaven* for all believers. It is beyond the reach of all enemies. Such an inheritance is not to be expected on earth. It is in heaven, where God dwells and displays his glory. There it is "prepared," and there it is "laid up." Heaven is God's habitation, and there glorified saints, holy angels, and the brightest intelligences, dwell; and of that happy spirit region Jesus says to his disciples, "that where I am, there ye may be also." It is reserved for you there till you die, and when you die you shall enter the joy of your Lord.

II. THAT ALL TRUE BELIEVERS HAVE AN INTEREST IN THIS INHERITANCE. "Begotten again unto a lively hope."

Naturally they have no title to it—no disposition to enjoy it—no meetness for it. But all these advantages can be realized. The Gospel received by faith, and the operation of the Spirit, produce in the soul of the believer "a lively hope" of the inheritance.

1. They have been begotten to a lively hope, and received a title to heaven, *by faith in the finished work of Christ*. A guilty sinner can never enjoy that inheritance. But a saved sinner can. What was the design of Christ's commission? "He came into the world to save sinners." To save them from guilt, from impurity, and from condemnation. Hence he perfectly conformed to the law—he died as the Surety of guilty man, Gal. 3 : 13; Eph. 1 : 7. "He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification."

Peter says, "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." The certainty of Christ's resurrection is the great seal of the Gospel. Without this, what is vision, what is prophecy, what is pro-

mise, what are even miracles, what the agony and death of Christ, without his resurrection? — But the resurrection of Christ from the dead is an absolute confirmation of God's acceptance of his mediation, by virtue of which the sinner is pardoned and justified, and receives peace, and joy, and hope.

For me, may the believer say, Christ paid the penalty due to my transgression, by shedding his precious blood. He was arrested by the law instead of me, and put to death in the flesh for me. For me he was buried, and for me the Almighty Captive burst the fetters of the tomb, and rose up to everlasting liberty and glory. This is the ground of my hope. Christ has taken that away from me, even the guilt and condemnation of sin, which would have forever excluded me from heaven. His resurrection is the basis of my justification. Because he was accepted, I also shall be accepted. Because he rose from the dead and ascended to heaven, I also shall arise from the grave and ascend to glory. Rom. 8 : 11.

2. All believers have been begotten to a lively hope of the inheritance by the *regenerating influences of the Spirit*. "Begotten again;" sometimes called "born again," John 3 : 3 ; 1 Pet. 1 : 23.

None can *inherit* eternal life, except those who are *children* in the heavenly family, and none are *children* but those who are *born again* — *born into it* by the power of the Spirit. "If *children*, then *heirs*;" if not children, then not heirs. — Peter here lays the foundation of the hope of eternal life in the regeneration of the soul; for none can legally inherit it but the children, and none are children of God till they are spiritually begotten, or born again.

The death and resurrection of Christ give a title and also a meetness for heaven; regeneration by the Spirit, and his continued operations give a disposition, a relish for, and an anxious desire to enjoy the inheritance. Thus hope is implanted in the breast. "By whom, also, we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." Rom. 5 : 2.

3. The hope of the Christian is a *lively hope*. Not a dead hope; not a languid and languishing hope; but a living, vital, active principle.

The object of it, heaven, is sufficient to make it lively. — It makes joyful in tribulation—it comforts in distress—it eclipses the glory of this world—it gives real enjoyment—it purifies the soul—it creates ardent and sometimes transporting expectations of eternal glory. Heb. 6 : 17–20.

III. THE AUTHOR AND SOURCE OF THE BELIEVER'S HOPE OF THE ETERNAL INHERITANCE. "The God and Father," etc.

1. *The Author is God*. The offended Creator and Lawgiver devised a plan for the salvation of rebels against his government. "God so loved the world."

2. Its Source is *Mercy*. Eternal mercy moved him to pity transgressors. He foresaw their fall—and his mercy provided a remedy, even Christ, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." — *Abundant mercy*. Think of the plan of redemption—of the

dignity and condescension of the Sufferer—of his unparalleled sufferings as man's substitute — of the vileness and unworthiness of man the sinner — of the vast, innumerable, and eternal blessings which the mercy of God, through Christ, bestows. The mercy of God is a deep, unfathomable, boundless, and inexhaustible ocean. "Where sin abounded, grace has much more abounded."

In salvation nothing can be ascribed to human merit, for demerit cannot merit. All must be ascribed to Divine goodness, the fountain of it all. Heb. 8 : 12; Jude 2; 2 Tim. 1 : 18.

3. Christ is the *medium* or *channel* through which this mercy flows. Let it not be forgotten that to enrich us with the hope of eternal life, he died, he rose, he ascended, and now he intercedes. Heb. 7 : 25.

IV. THE GRATEFUL EMOTION WITH WHICH THE MERCY OF GOD SHOULD BE REGARDED. "Blessed be the God."

It is the language of *experience*. I have the lively hope of immortality, I feel its enlivening and supporting influence. "Blessed be the God," etc.

It is the language of *humility*. I am not worthy of it. I deserve wrath; but "blessed be the God," etc.

It is the language of *adoring love*. I love him because he first loved me. I love my Surety, my Ransomer, Jesus my Righteousness and Strength.

It is the language of *praise*. Vocally, when he sings the songs of Zion — when to his brethren he tells what God has done for his soul. Mentally, when he contemplates the vast ocean of redeeming grace. "Blessed be the God."

It is the language of *devotedness*. "I am thine, for thou hast redeemed me." I am not my own, but thine, to glorify thee in my body and spirit. All I have I consecrate to thee.

It is the language of *heaven*. Praise here is akin to praise there. Praise begun here shall be continued there. In the heavenly temple they rest not day nor night in praising God for salvation, saying, Rev. 5 : 12, 13.

APPLICATION.

How blessed are Christians — how cheering their prospects!
Do you feel this hope cheer you? "For we are saved by hope."
Hopeless sinner, how wretched thy state!

LXXXIII. — DELIVERANCE IN THE DAY OF TROUBLE.

"And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." — PSALM 50 : 15.

MUCH of the present life is spent in personal suffering, or in relative affliction and distress. But in trouble God has provided for his Church

strong consolation. Hence the Bible abounds with exceeding great and precious promises, which cheer and soothe us under all our sorrows. — The office of the Christian ministry is to bring relief to the bosom of the sorrowful. Isa. 40 : 1, 2. — The Psalm was written by Asaph. — A pompous religion is nothing compared with the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart. — When thou art in trouble, rest not in mere formal sacrifice and worship. "Call upon me in the day of trouble."

I. THE SEASON. "Day of trouble." Take a twofold view of trouble: —

1. *Internally*, the Christian has to contend with trouble.

(1.) The *time of spiritual conviction* is a day of trouble, though it may end in a day of joy. —

Then the sinner feels that the wrath of God is upon him. Acts 2 : 37 ; 16 : 30.

Then the backslider also is filled with his own ways. Prov. 14 : 14. He sees how he has dishonored God, his cause, etc.

(2.) The *time of inward conflict* is a day of trouble. Then the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, etc. Rom. 7 : 24.

(3.) The *season of temptation* is a day of trouble. When Satan desires to have them, etc. — when he comes in like a flood — when he suggests the most horrible thoughts. 1 Pet. 1 : 6, 7.

(4.) The *period of mental depression*. May be constitutional — imaginary fears — fear of having no interest in God — spiritual attainments small — no sensible evidence of God's love. Has he withdrawn himself? Job 23 : 8.

2. *Externally*, the Christian has to contend with trouble.

(1.) *Afflictions*. Personal — relative — bereavements.

(2.) *Reproach and persecution*.

(3.) *Worldly losses* — sometimes productive of poverty and distress.

(4.) *The low state of Zion*. Divisions and dissensions — the apostacy of some — the lukewarmness of others.

(5.) *The boundings of error*. Opposition to the cause of Christ. The providence of atheism and infidel philosophy.

II. THE PRIVILEGE. "Call upon me." How comforting this! "God is a very present help." Ps. 46. — What does this gracious direction imply?

1. *Helplessness*. Thou canst not deliver thyself. Turn from every human refuge to me.

2. *The power and willingness of God to deliver*. "Call upon me." I am the Almighty God. "My grace is sufficient for thee." He is able to help — he compassionates the distressed — he hears and answers prayer, Isa. 65 : 24 ; Matt. 7 : 7.

3. *Prayer*. "Call upon me." Distrust of all other means of relief — call upon me, through Christ. "Ask the Father in my name," John 14 : 13, 14. — Pray therefore in faith — earnestly — importunately — submissively.

III. THE PROMISE. "I will deliver thee."

1. He has *promised to deliver*. "I will deliver thee." See Job 22 : 27; Ps. 91 : 15, 16; Ps. 107 : 6, 13, 19, 28.

2. *He can deliver*. He can provide unexpected means of deliverance. He can enlarge our prospects, and open new channels for the communication of his mercy. The issues of providence are all with him; the wheels of nature, which are bringing constant supplies for an indigent universe, are under the conduct of his infinite power and wisdom.

Do you want *pardon*, he can give it — can deliver you from *conflict*, *temptation*, *mental depression*. [Refer to Part I.] See 2 Pet. 2 : 9.

3. *He has delivered and will deliver*. He delivered the patriarchs from their troubles. Instance also Job and David, Ps. 34 : 4-6, — and Daniel—Shadrach, etc.,—Peter from prison—Paul often from his enemies.—What he has done before, he will do again. Yes, he does deliver. In sickness, have you not prayed, and health has come again to your frame? etc.

4. Sometimes he *delivers by granting more than an equivalent blessing*. So in the case of Paul. 2 Cor. 12 : 8, 9. I will deliver thee from thy fears and anxiety by comforting and supporting thee; giving thee such spiritual enjoyment as thou hast never experienced *when not in trouble*. I will cause thee to rejoice in tribulation, and to count it all joy when thou fallest into divers temptations. I will afford such cordials, and impart such inward strength, as to make thee more than a conqueror over all the evils that may be feared or felt. I will afford thee such manifestations of my presence, as to render thee almost insensible of thy sorrows. — Under such support the rich have rejoiced that they were made low, and emptied of all their worldly fulness, that they might become rich in faith, etc.

5. *He will give everlasting deliverance*. Christ overcame the world for this purpose, John 16 : 33. "There remaineth a rest." "These are they which come out of great tribulation." Rev. 7 : 14. The storms of life may be boisterous; but we need fear no shipwreck; we may be tossed with tempest, and not comforted, but we shall get safe into harbor at last; yes, have "an abundant entrance," etc.

IV. THE CONSEQUENT DUTY. "Thou shalt glorify me."

When a man is said to glorify God, it does not mean that he can add anything to his essential glory.—But the deliverance which God effects displays his power, wisdom, and love. — I will deliver thee, and thou shalt be a monument to display my glory.—God too is pleased to receive the homage, the praise, and service of those whom he delivers. — Glorify him,

1. By acknowledging the interposition of his hand.
2. By Praise. See v. 14, 23, of Psalm 50.
3. By devotedness to his service — advancing his kingdom.

Has God delivered thee from thy sins? Go and crown the Saviour Lord of all. Has he raised thee from the bed of sickness? Go with thy renewed strength to work in his vineyard. Has he raised thee from the depths of poverty? Go honor the Lord with thy substance. —

APPLICATION.

1. Never attempt to bear your burden yourselves. "Cast thy burden," etc.

2. Sympathize with those in trouble. Visit them—cheer them—help them. 1 Cor. 12 : 25, 26.

LXXXIV.—CHRIST THE RESTORER.

"Then I restored that which I took not away." — Pa. 69 : 4.

THIS Psalm is descriptive of the sufferings and death of the Redeemer. He is represented as speaking of himself as almost overwhelmed in sorrow and suffering.——In this verse he complains to his Father of the hatred, power, and malice of his numerous foes. The Jews, the Romans, and the spirits of darkness, were like a numerous herd of ravenous wolves surrounding the Lamb of God, thirsting after his blood, which at length they shed. And thus the only innocent person in the world made satisfaction for transgressors.

I. A ROBBERY IMPLIED. "That which I took not away."——Robbery has been committed. Some one has been deprived of that which the Saviour restored.

God and man have been robbed.

It appears from Gen. 3 : 1-6, that this robbery was committed by Satan, who is called a murderer and a liar from the beginning, John 8 : 44.

Man was created by Jehovah, who stamped upon him his image, and made him happy, and pronounced him very good.

1. *God was robbed.*

(1.) Of *his glory*. His glory was seen in man's purity—in man's intelligence—in his resemblance to God, made after his own image. All this Satan reversed.——

(2.) Of *man's affections* and obedience. The beneficence of the Creator was man's motive to love and obey him. But he yielded his affections to Satan.

A greater honor could not have been conferred upon Satan than for our first parents to believe what he said in preference to what the God of truth said.

2. *Man was robbed.* Man, though created perfectly holy, was mutable. He had power sufficient to preserve his innocence, but was liable to fall. His fall was voluntary. Satan could tempt, not force his will. He might have resisted, and maintained his integrity.

Man was robbed,

1. Of *his purity*. His soul became depraved; full of evil passions and lusts. Gen. 6 : 5; Rom. 1.

2. *Communion with God.* 1 Cor. 6 : 11.
3. *Robbed of light*—of holy intelligence. The understanding is darkened. Eph. 4 : 18.
4. *Holy freedom.* Became a slave to sin, a transgressor, condemned, and exposed to the wrath of God.
5. *Happiness.* As connected with purity, etc.
6. *Paradise.* Was expelled. Lost hope of heaven. Became subject to natural death. Such is the abject state of man—robbed of life—natural life—spiritual life—eternal life. Paradise lost.

II. THE RESTORATION. "Then I restored," etc.

That is, by my suffering and death, and the gift of my Spirit, I restored that image of God, and the Divine favor which I took not away. I magnified the law and made it honorable by becoming the Surety of man.

To restore, means to place again in the first state or condition, Isa. 1 : 26 ; Acts 1 : 6 ; also to make restitution, or satisfaction for injuries inflicted ;—text—Christ may be called the Repairer, etc. Isa. 58 : 12.

1. *Christ is the Restorer.* Qualified by his *Divinity*—*humanity*—his *perfect purity* ; perfect conformity to the law. He never transgressed the law. "That which I took not away." Heb. 7 : 26.

2. He was *prompted* to restore by *infinite love*. He was a *voluntary sacrifice*. John 10 : 17, 18.

3. He restored by his *sufferings and death*, which were vicarious. He obeyed the law, endured its penalty, became the victim of its curse as man's Surety. God's government was honored—the claims of Divine justice were satisfied. His sacrifice was an offering, etc. Eph. 5 : 2.

Thus he restores *to God* that which he took not away, and *to man* he restores

(1.) *Righteousness*, in state, and in heart. He is pardoned and justified. He is regenerated—made holy.

(2.) *The Divine Favor.* God through Christ smiles upon him. He adopts him—communes with him, etc.

(3.) *Light* ; spiritual understanding. 2 Cor. 4 : 6.

(4.) *Spiritual happiness* ; arising from being saved ; from holy exercises, and blissful anticipations.

(5.) *Paradise.* The Heavenly Inheritance. Paradise regained. Body and soul will be restored from the ravages of sin, and be introduced to that glorious Eden, to sin and die no more.

Finally. This restoration can be realized by faith alone.

LXXXV.—REJECTION OF DIVINE LIFE.

"And ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life."—JOHN 5 : 40.

By this declaration Christ charges the Jews with obstinate infidelity. — Some of them had heard the testimony of God from heaven—the announcements of John the Baptist. They had heard the sublime teaching of the Redeemer, and witnessed his stupendous miracles, etc., —indubitable evidences of his Divinity, yet they would not recognize him as the Messiah, nor come to him as the Saviour for salvation.

I. THE BLESSING WHICH CHRIST DISPENSES: "Life."

Not mere natural or intellectual life, though Christ is the Author of both — but spiritual and heavenly life.

1. *Spiritual life.* This comprises the enjoyment of the Divine favor—love to God and union with him—delight in his service, and holy fellowship.

This is not the state of man as a sinner. No; for as a transgressor he is condemned, he is depraved, averse to God and holy pursuits. All his powers are dead to spiritual action. Rom. 8 : 7; 1 Cor. 2 : 14.

Spiritual life consists in freedom from condemnation. Rom. 8 : 1, 2. Effected by the mediation of Christ, Rom. 5 : 1; Acts 13 : 38, 39.

It consists also in the renovation of the soul—the infusion of life into its dead powers. Eph. 2 : 1, 2, etc.; Rom. 6 : 17, 18, 22; 8 : 5, 6–10.

This is a life of holiness—of freedom—of exquisite pleasure and delight—of agreeable associations—of distinguished privilege and honor, and of exhilarating hope.—

2. Christ gives *heavenly life*; eternal in its duration, John 3 : 16; 4 : 14; 6 : 27, 51; 10 : 28. How blissful its nature!

Christ is the Author and Giver of this life. He revealed heaven—he opened the way to it by his sacrifice, resurrection, ascension, and intercession, "Whither Jesus," etc. Heb. 6 : 20.

3. Christ bestows spiritual and eternal life gratuitously. "I give," etc. "Take the water of life *freely*."

II. THE MEANS OF OBTAINING THIS LIFE. "Ye will not come unto me."

Coming to Christ is the way of salvation. John 6 : 37; Matt. 11 : 28.

Not a mere bodily act—not merely professional. Many come thus, but come not at all.

This coming is the approach of the soul, implying *deep conviction of need—humility—faith in his blood—fixed determination to ob-*

tain life in the appointed way—great earnestness. Like a thirsty man in the desert, Give me water or I die.

In this way myriads have come.—Look up to yon great number which no man can number.

III. THE CONTEMPT OF THIS BLESSING. “Ye will not come unto me,” etc.

This is the case with the greater portion of those to whom Christ is preached. He says from his cross, “Come, and I will give you life, happiness, honor, dignity, and glory. Come, ye guilty, and I will pardon you, ye condemned, and I will justify you,” etc. But they say, “We will not come—we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.”

If worldly honors, worldly possessions and pleasures were offered them, they would instantly come to Christ. The drowning man instantly seizes the outstretched arm—the diseased man welcomes the physician—the dying Israelite willingly looks at the serpent of brass to save natural life; but very few will look to Christ’s cross to save the soul. —What is the cause?

1. *Ignorance.* Of their ruined and lost estate — of the glorious nature of the life which Christ gives, and which they absolutely need.

2. *Love of the world.* The pleasures of earth—the cares of life—the engagements of business—the allurements of wealth, choke the seed of the kingdom. These hold the soul fast—captivate.

3. *Unbelief.* The great sin of the Jews. Some do not credit the Gospel—some want to save themselves—are not disposed to rest on Christ. Some presume on the mere mercy of God, etc.

4. *Procrastination.* Resolve to come at some future convenient time.

5. *Extreme obduracy of heart,* and determined *enmity to Christianity.* “Foolishness unto those who perish.”

IV. THE FOLLY AND DANGER OF REJECTING SPIRITUAL AND EVERLASTING LIFE.

1. It is the rejection of the most precious and invaluable blessing in the universe, —“Life.” Compared with this what are riches, kingdoms, etc.?

What folly to prefer trifles and shadows to immortal life! What absurdity!

2. It is the suspension of this great blessing upon a mere contingency—a future opportunity which may never arrive.

3. The rejection of this great blessing will meet with condign punishment. Heb. 10 : 28; 12 : 25.

LXXXVI.—THE DEPRESSION OF ZION AND THE MEANS OF ITS REVIVAL.

“By whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small.”—Amos 7 : 2.

Sin is the source of all sorrow. The history of the people of Israel confirms the statement. Hence when punished God thus addresses them: “Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God?” Jer. 2 : 17. In this chapter, famine, dearth, and misery are denounced against that rebellious nation, v. 1, 2; though some understand the language figuratively of a wasting, destroying army brought upon them; other calamities also are threatened, v. 4–9. Illustrated also by 2 Kings 7 : 25. — Calmet remarks: “After the death of Jeroboam, the second, the kingdom, once so powerful and flourishing, was reduced to such weakness, that it was obliged to have recourse to strangers for support.

Various are the causes which depress Zion. It is principally sin—the want of spirituality—of zeal, prayer, faith.

Let us apply the text to the present state of the Church.

The members of Christ’s Church are called the “Israel of God;” “Israelites indeed;” “Jews inwardly.” Like the ancient Hebrews, they are God’s chosen and peculiar people. He preserves and provides for them who are really his. He writes his law in their hearts, they love him and serve him with a pure heart fervently.

I. THE DEPRESSION OF ZION. “Jacob is small.”

The word “small” in Scriptures, means few in number, Ex. 12 : 4; weak in strength, Luke 12 : 28; Rev. 3 : 8, 2.

1. *Zion is small in number.* Called a “little flock.” It is so as compared with the vast mass of false religionists, as the Mahomedans, the Pagans, the adherents of the Man of Sin. Small as compared with vast numbers of the ungodly. — Though Zion’s converts are yet to resemble the drops of the morning dew, yet at the present time the number of Christ’s real disciples is but small.

2. *Zion is small or low in personal religion.* This comprises

(1.) *Knowledge*, as imparted by reading the Scriptures, hearing the word, and by the Spirit’s teaching. Without this there can be no vital and elevating religion existing in the soul of man. For this leads to a perception of spiritual destitution—this leads to Christ the great Saviour, through whom salvation is secured. — Such knowledge is the foundation of personal happiness, and of Zion’s prosperity. — And the cause of so many professors being weak, and sickly, and ready to faint, and the cause of the exclamation, “Jacob is small,” is a defectiveness in this knowledge. See Heb. 5 : 12; 1 Cor. 15 : 34.

(2.) *Assurance of Salvation.* A sensible evidence that we have an interest in Christ—a conviction that we are pardoned and delivered from condemnation, etc.—in short, to enjoy salvation. Those who

enjoy salvation, will love and serve Christ vigorously, 2 Cor. 5 : 14. — Yet, how few have this assurance! — Defective piety is a great cause of Jacob being small.

3. *Zion is low in spirituality and heavenly-mindedness.* "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Christians should act as those who are born from above—as those who expect soon to be in heaven. — But what worldly conformity! How little different do some professors appear from the men of the world! To how many might an apostle say, "Are ye not yet carnal?"

4. *Zion is small or low in a devotional spirit.* Look at Christ! Prayer was his element. Look at the Apostles and at the primitive saints. They loved prayer, and the hand of the Lord was with them.

Private prayer, ejaculatory prayer, and public devotions, are eminently promotive of personal piety, and the prosperity of the Church. — Look at your prayer-meetings; how few attend them—how few love there to pray! To a convivial party—to the place of mere gossip—to the sounds of music, and to the voice of choristers—to the rendezvous of news and politics, thousands will readily, cheerfully, and instantly go. But how difficult for the "two or three who gather together in Christ's name," to prevail with perhaps one-half, or one-third of any church to join in communion with their God! Alas! "Jacob is small."

5. *Zion is small in Christian union and brotherly love.* Christians are to love as brethren—highly to esteem each other irrespective of worldly station—to sympathize with each other—to assist one another when subject to trials—to pray for one another.

Hence these scriptural enforcements: Rom. 12 : 10, 13, 15; 1 Cor. 1 : 10, 11; 2 Cor. 13 : 11; Eph. 4 : 31, 32. Such an exhibition as here recommended, would make Zion glorious in the earth. — But in this the Church is very deficient. Christians too often fall out by the way. — What bitter manifestations sometimes among sects and parties!

6. *Zion is deficient in zeal and Christian enterprise.* Zeal to spread the truth—to save souls from death—to glorify the Redeemer. — Look at the men of the world—how they plan, labor, and succeed. "The children of this world are wiser," etc.

7. *Zion is deficient in fidelity to the truth and ordinances of Christ.*

Some have corrupted his doctrines; others have changed the ordinances—others have introduced ridiculous ceremonies, etc. Even some ministers pretend to Apostolical succession—to a right Divine to govern the Church as *their* judgment may suggest. Thus man, instead of sitting at the feet of Christ, has insulted his authority, and trespassed upon his prerogative as the only Lawgiver of the Church.

II. THE ELEVATION OF ZION. "By whom shall Jacob arise?"

To arise means to recover life, honor, power, happiness.

Consider the subject *Negatively* : —

1. Not by mere *external pomp and grandeur*. Vain the cathedral pomp, the solemn chant, the voices of choristers, the organ's wailing peal, the gorgeous vestments of the priesthood.——And yet men substitute these for the simple worship of God. They may suit the carnal taste, and attract multitudes ; but they are founded on mere vanity.

2. Not by mere *human instrumentality*. Some are for Paul—Apollon—Cephas—placing all their dependence upon a mere creature of literary attainments, eloquent tongue, and commanding figure.——It is all in vain ! Jacob will not really rise if this be all. “ Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels.” 1 Cor. 13 : 1-3.

3. Not by *coercion as effected by the civil power*. Was the Church ever elevated by penal enactments imposed upon those refusing to bow at the shrine of national religious establishments ? What has been their influence ? A most evil one, — to render “ Jacob small.” Coercion is an insult to the free-born mind. ——

4. Not by the *miraculous intervention of Heaven*. This is desired, expected, and attempted by some at the present day. But on what ground do they expect this ?——The very idea is absurd and a delusion.

5. Not by mere *enthusiasm and temporary excitement*, working upon the passions of men to produce temporary alarm, etc. Voci-feration, phrensy, alarming cries for mercy, may take place without the impartation of saving knowledge. But there can be no true conversion without it.

Positively : “ By whom ? ”

1. *By Jehovah himself*. He has all *power*. He is *willing*. It is his *own cause*, on which his heart is fixed, and which he has purposed to make glorious in the earth. In all efforts to elevate Zion, there must be a *special recognition of Divine power*, or all will fail.

He can elevate Zion by the *operations of his Providence*, removing national impediments, casting down opposing monarchs and princes, and hurling despotic thrones to the dust.

He can do it by the *agency of his Spirit*. “ Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened ? ” Micah 2 : 7. No, he has the same power, and the same freeness of communication, John 16 : 7, 18. And when that spirit is poured out from on high, tokens of revival will soon appear. See Isa. 44 : 3-5.

2. *By human instrumentality*. Including,

1. *Individual renovation*, or personal revival. To attain this there must be deep affection for the low state of Zion. —— Self-examination : have I caused Jacob to be so small by defalcation in duty, prayer, attendance on worship, by withholding pecuniary support ? —— Repentance. —— Prayer for forgiveness and Divine influence to dispose the heart to seek Zion's prosperity.

2. The *consecration* of all gifts and talents to promote the elevation of Zion. Consecrate time—wisdom—preaching abilities, etc. etc. — Ministers must preach faithfully, disinterestedly, sincerely, watching for souls, etc.

3. By a strict adherence to the doctrines, ordinances, and precepts, as they are *simply and purely* revealed in the Scriptures. God will prosper *his own truth*.

4. By *punctual and devout attendance* on the means of grace.

5. Fervent and importunate *prayer*. — Act agreeably to your prayers. Expect answers to your prayers.

LXXXVII. — DIVINE GOODNESS SATISFYING.

"And my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the Lord."—JER. 31 : 14.

THE latter-day glory is predicted by the prophet, a distinguished part of which will be the restoration of the Jews, and their return to the holy land of their fathers. At that future and glorious era the Divine goodness will be profusely manifested to all his people, whether Jews or Gentiles, so that they "shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures." Ps. 36 : 8.

I. AN INTERESTING SUBJECT STATED. The Goodness of God. "My goodness."

The moral attributes of God afford infinite matter for deep and interesting meditation. His wisdom astonishes and confounds; his power fills us with awe; but his goodness attracts and engages our love.

Goodness is an essential property of the Divine nature, and is manifest in the provision which he has made for the happiness of the creatures he has called into existence. He himself claims this attribute, Ex. 34 : 5. — The inspired writers invariably ascribe it to him. Ps. 165 : 7. It belongs only to him, Matt. 19 : 17.

It is the delight and glory of Deity to exercise this perfection.

He has manifested it, and he still manifests it,

1. In the *work of creation*, wherein are discovered, Variety — Richness — Beauty — Order.

2. In the *government of the world*. Assigning to all his creatures their particular office and station. — Amply providing for all their wants, Ps. 165 : 7, 8. — Specially protecting his people from danger. — Restraining the wrath of man. — Producing good out of evil.

3. In the *work of redemption*. Pitying guilty man — devising the plan of salvation — sending his Son as the Saviour — in the blessings of salvation conferred upon believers. Pardon, justification, peace, adoption, eternal life, the Spirit, etc.

4. In the appointment of the *Gospel Ministry*, to call men to repentance and faith, etc.

How great then is his goodness! It is infinite! It is the astonishment of heaven! Faculties more acute than ours cannot conceive, and tongues, fired by the eloquence of heaven, cannot declare its magnitude. Superior spirits, who look upon many of the objects of human admiration as we do on the wonder of children, share in those emotions of devout astonishment with which we contemplate the grace of Jesus.

II. A DELIGHTFUL INFLUENCE EXPRESSED. "My people shall be satisfied with my goodness."

To *satisfy* means to bestow a sufficient supply of anything desired. A man's appetite is satisfied when he receives an adequate supply of food, Prov. 6 : 30. The mind is satisfied when it receives all the comforts, delights, and blessings wished for, Ps. 91 : 16 ; 165 : 16. A good man is satisfied from himself—with Christ and his grace lodged in his heart—his conscience sprinkled with the blood of Christ, etc. Prov. 14 : 14.

1. Why does this goodness satisfy God's people?

(1.) *Because it is ADAPTED to supply all their temporal and spiritual wants.* As creatures, God cares for his people. Matt. 6 : 26. His providence constantly watches over them.—As sinners, it richly and completely meets their case. They are lost—it provides them a Saviour; they are guilty, it provides them with forgiveness, etc. etc.

(2.) *Because it is abundant*—boundless. In Christ all fulness dwells. Fulness of light—of liberty—of peace—of comfort and joy—of grace, and strength, and of love.

Earthly things may be valuable, but they seldom abound. The Gospel is an ocean of rich and satisfying bliss, deep, unfathomable, and inexhaustible. Here is rich, adapted, and satisfying goodness, and it is called "abundant mercy." 1 Pet. 1 : 3. Therefore it will satisfy. Rom. 10 : 12. All who come to this fountain will be supplied. All who feel their need of it are welcomed by God to enjoy it. "Him that cometh." John 6 : 37.

(3.) It is *freely given to the most unworthy*. Isa. 55 : 1, etc. "Fear not, little flock," etc. It requires no labor of our hands, no costly offerings, no vows, penances, pilgrimages, etc. No, it is free. The greatest, richest, and most durable blessings in the universe, are *free*. It must therefore satisfy.

(4.) It *infinitely surpasses all earthly enjoyments in yielding satisfaction*.—Does wealth, does honor, does sensual indulgence, give real and lasting satisfaction? Listen to the prophet; Isa. 55 : 2.

The worldly man delights in earthly things and practices, because they gratify his carnal appetites and passions; and such is his caprice, and so unsatisfactory does he find them, that he quickly turns with disgust from that which he sought with eagerness.—But it is the love of Christ enjoyed with temporal blessings which makes the pious experi-

ence in the meanest dwelling, and with the scantiest fare, more delight than the wicked have in the highest prosperity. Were this ingredient to be extracted from their comforts, they would feel themselves wretched though feasted at the table and clothed from the wardrobe of princes.

Nothing but the goodness of God can satisfy the boundless desires of the soul. Gold says, *It is not in me, etc.*

(5.) *Because it is everlasting.*

The goodness of man is often as the morning cloud, etc. "All flesh is grass." Isa. 40 : 6-8. "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting"—"it endureth forever," inexhausted in its stores, and unwearied in working. This earth, which is so full of his mercy, shall pass away. Time, whose rolling tide spreads its bounty from day to day, shall sink into eternity; but the love of God through Christ shall fill a nobler sphere with blessings suited to a state of perfection, by a stream ever-flowing and ever full.

2. When are God's people satisfied with his goodness?

(1.) At the time of *spiritual conviction*. When they become "poor in spirit." When they exclaim, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

Then are they satisfied with the Saviour's blood—with the Physician's skill and healing—with the good Samaritan's oil and wine—with the liberty, peace, and joy given them by the great Ransomer. The guilt is removed—the burden is gone—the bondage is broken. — They are satisfied.

(2.) *In the time of Adversity*. Poverty—affliction—bereavements.

They are allotted to me by a good God, to deliver me from evil, and to promote my good. The cup is bitter, but he has mingled it with mercy; therefore the operation and the issue will be good. His good hand supports me—his good promises cheer me—his good presence holds me up; I am safe; I am satisfied; the will of the Lord be done, "All things shall work together for good," etc.

(3.) *In the time of prosperity.*

I am thankful for temporal things; but I value the gifts of thy grace more. This wealth, this honor, etc., cannot satisfy me; but thy goodness, through Christ, can. I shall soon pass away from these earthly possessions. Others will soon possess them; but thy goodness cheers me, satisfies me, because it provides me a more enduring substance—a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

(4.) *In the solemn hour of death*. O what will be needed then to make me die happy! How shall I sustain the conflict?

Human possessions—the filthy rags of self-righteousness will be insufficient then. But thine infinite goodness—the infinite merits of thy Son—the infinite satisfaction he gave to thy justice, will satisfy for me, and satisfy me then. Resting on his sacrifice I shall be supported, and made triumphant in death.

(5.) *It shall forever satisfy in heaven.* "O how great is the good-
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ness which thou hast laid up for those that fear thee," and which shall gild every throne with splendor, and fill every heart with pleasures evermore. "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."

In heaven our capacity of enjoyment will far exceed what it is now, and yet it will be abundantly satisfied. Even in this state, the desires of the soul are greater than all the world can satisfy, as proved by the misery of the rich and great, who have no interest in God; and yet our powers have not the expansion of the eternal state. We know but in part, are in a state of infancy, and our moral capacity weakened by the remains of indwelling sin, but when we awake in the image of God, all these impediments will be removed.

Our want of spiritual enjoyment arises also from defective knowledge, the want of more enlarged and realizing views of celestial things; but in the future state the soul will forever expand, and yet be forever filled and satisfied from the Fountain of all intelligence.

Here our enjoyments are abridged and interrupted by painful conflicts of various kinds; but when we awake with the Divine likeness, these shall be known no more.

The mystery of God will be finished; and as the finishing of the work of redemption added to the joy of the Church, much more will the consummation of the whole scheme of providence and grace, by the destruction of the last enemy, fill all heaven with joy and praise. All the comforts of the Gospel here are only the foretaste, heavenly bliss will be the fulness; this is only the seed-time, that is the harvest.

Our conformity to the image of Christ here, though imperfect, is essential to our salvation, and the necessary medium of all spiritual enjoyment; but when this resemblance shall be complete, in body and soul, and every look and lineament become Divine, the joy and satisfaction of the believer will also be complete, and God shall be all in all. "My people shall be satisfied with my goodness."

LXXXVIII. — TRUST IN GOD PRODUCTIVE OF HAPPINESS.

"Whoso trusteth in the Lord happy is he." — Prov. 16 : 20.

"GODLINESS is profitable for all things." The most intelligent have given their verdict in favor of religion. — And though some may see it through a false medium, or be so enchanted by the pleasures of sense as for a time to forget it, yet in the hour of solemn and deliberate thought, they agree with Solomon, "Whoso," etc. — The holy fruits of religion, its substantial pleasures, its power to preserve from evil, its supporting influence in times of calamity, and its glorious effects on futurity, must endear it to every sober and intelligent mind.

I. THE IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE TO BE EXERCISED. "Trust."

"Trust" signifies dependence, reliance, confidence. Trust, in the Old Testament, and faith in the New, are synonymous. Eph. 1 : 12, 13. It implies,—

1. *A deep sense of our sinfulness and helplessness, and a knowledge of Christ the Mediator.*—The man who trusts in God is savingly illuminated on these subjects.

2. *A knowledge of God's gracious character as the object of trust.* "They that know," etc. Ps. 9 : 10.

Safely to trust in any man, we must have an approving knowledge of his character. — The infinite love of God; the rich provisions of his grace; the pleasure he takes in the prosperity of his servants, etc., warrant the soul to trust him. — Trust in God is opposed to self-confidence, to trust in the law, moral duties, etc. This would be like a man treading on soft yielding ground, incapable of supporting the feet, etc. The man who trusts in God through Christ, places his soul on a Rock firm and immovable, Isa. 28 : 16; Heb. 13 : 8.

3. *A constant reliance upon God for all temporal and spiritual blessings.*

For food, etc. For pardon and acceptance; for peace, preservation, and the fulfilment of his promises; the keeping of the soul, and its salvation, against that day. Paul knew whom he believed. — He that trusts God, expects and waits for the manifestation of his love.

II. ITS GRACIOUS INFLUENCE. "Happy is he."

1. He has the favorable *testimony of God.* Heb. 11 : 5, 6, etc.

2. He enjoys the infinite *blessings of salvation.* He is saved. Delivered from the wrath to come. "Kept by the power of God." 1 Pet. 1 : 5.

3. Trust *ennobles, elevates, and dignifies him*, making him more excellent than his neighbor. It sanctifies.

4. *It cheers and supports him in the darkest season.* It did Abraham, Heb. 11 : 8, 9, and Job, who said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." And David and Habakkuk, ch. 3 : 17, 18.

5. By it he *conquers his enemies.* The world, 1 John 5 : 4, 5; Satan, Eph. 6 : 16, etc. etc.

6. *It is productive of the hope of heaven.* Heb. 11 : 1.

It produces joy. It calms the mind. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee." Isa. 26 : 3. The idea is taken from an army besieged; the place is impregnable; the munitions of war are abundant; the stores of provision are sufficiently ample. The attack against it may be terrible and furious, but the soldiers of the garrison are at peace, calm, collected, and confident, knowing where their strength lies.

Lastly. It *conquers death.* 1 Cor. 15 : 55–57.

LXXXIX. — HEAVENLY-MINDEDNESS.

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."—COL. 3 : 1, 2.

THE character of a real Christian is ever lovely, exalted, and attractive. Being the effect of Divine operation, it causes a poor, defiled sinner in some degree to resemble God in his moral perfections, being "created of him in righteousness and true holiness." Angels admire his character, and men are influenced by it. If properly developed, great will be its influence; it will commend itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.——Heavenly-mindedness is a glorious trait in that character, and it should be exemplified by all Christ's disciples. It is a fruit of regeneration: hence some commentators read the text, "Seeing that ye are risen," etc. It may have to contend with worldly and sinful impediments, etc., yet heavenly-mindedness in degree will ever be exemplified by the Christian.

I. THE CHARACTER OF A CHRISTIAN, AS HERE EXPRESSED. They are "risen with Christ:" they partake of the benefits of his death, resurrection, and ascension, and by his Spirit have been raised from the misery and degradation of sin to the pursuit of holiness and to the hope of heaven.

The Apostle, as Dr. Adam Clarke observes, founds his argument upon his statement, ch. 2 : 11, 12, 13, etc. From which observe that a Christian has—

1. *A firm belief in the Divine mission of Christ, as proved by his resurrection. "Through the faith of the operation of God,"* ch. 2 : 12.

Here the agency of God in raising him up is acknowledged—a belief of the fact that God raised him from the dead. The resurrection of Christ is a vital subject, gives validity to the life, teaching, miracles, and sacrifice of Christ. I Cor. 15 : 12–20.

2. *An experimental acquaintance with the power of Christ's resurrection in quickening the soul to spiritual life, and to the enjoyment of salvation.*

As Christ was raised from the grave to die no more, so in virtue of that all who believe in Christ are raised from the death of sin to eternal spiritual life. "*Ye are risen with Christ,*" from the death of sin to the life of religion. Rom. 6 : 4, 5. This quickening led to the enjoyment of salvation. Christ's resurrection and ascension were succeeded by the gifts and influences of the Spirit, which produce conviction, faith, etc., and lead to pardon, etc. Col. 2 : 13, 14; Eph. 1 : 1–6.

These glorious operations are symbolically represented by the ordinance of baptism. Mr. Wesley says, that Col. 2 : 12, and Rom. 6 : 4, 5, allude to the ancient mode of baptism by immersion. In baptism, the believer follows Christ—imitates him—is risen with him. It

represents the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and the believer's interest in them. It represents a death unto sin, and a resurrection to a life of spirituality. "Risen with Christ."

II. THAT IT IS THE DUTY AND PRIVILEGE OF CHRISTIANS TO SEEK AFTER HEAVENLY THINGS. "Seek," etc.

This is a necessary consequence of the Divine change. "You are risen with Christ, and will seek those things which are above."

The language may, however, be regarded as an exhortation. "Seek—set your," etc. The world, with its cares, etc., the deceitful heart, often cause you to forget this duty. You forget that you are pilgrims, etc.

To seek those things which are above implies, —

1. A full belief that the grand object of Christ's resurrection and ascension to "*the right hand of God*," was to secure the salvation of his people, and render them forever happy. John 14 : 1, 2; Heb. 6 : 19, 20.

2. *Earnestness to acquire a knowledge of those things which are above*, as far as they are revealed in the Scriptures. The reading of them will be combined with study and prayer.

What are those things which are above? What saith the Scripture?

Emancipation from earth, and deliverance from all its toils; deliverance from a body of sin and death; the vision of heaven's splendor and glory; the vision of God and all the celestial inhabitants; communion with them; fellowship with God; perfection of character, purity, knowledge, etc.; perfect and uninterrupted happiness; ecstatic employments — eternity.

3. *A decided preference of the things above to the things on earth*. "Not on things on earth." We cannot ardently love both. They are seen to be superior, more substantial, more enduring. Consequently, —

4. *The Affections* (or the desires, aspirations, and passions) *of the soul are placed on them*.

This world is regarded as a wilderness through which the Christian travels to his everlasting home. His heart is there, and the hope which is laid up for him in heaven cheers him on; "love his appearing;" "conversation in heaven," Phil. 3 : 20; "in a strait betwixt two." — His best friend—the Head—the Bridegroom of the Church is in heaven; therefore, the affections of the Bride, the Church, are fixed upon him. As the Head has an affectionate influence over the members, so the members have an affection for the Head, causing them to aspire heavenward. Hence, 1 Pet. 1 : 8; Ps. 73 : 25. "Whom have I in heaven," etc.

5. *Constant faith in the sacrifice of Christ*, as the legitimate medium of access to God, and of entrance into heaven.

6. The use of all Divinely appointed means of grace by which to

promote the moral and spiritual fitness of the soul for heavenly society. Heaven the object of pursuit in them all.

7. *Efforts to reconcile the mind to death*—that when the King of terrors strikes his mortal blow there may be no surprise; but rather that the solemn event may be daily, hourly, and triumphantly expected. “Always ready;” “ready to be offered.” Luke 12: 35-40.

III. THE ADVANTAGES RESULTING FROM SUCH CONDUCT.

1. *Assurance and peace.* An evidence to ourselves that we are *risen with Christ* our Head. “He that believeth hath the witness in himself.” He converses with heaven.

2. *Dignity.* The influence of heavenly things is to ennoble, to dignify. Men of the world, who have their portion in this life, are enslaved—looking no higher than the grovelling pursuits of earth.

3. *Great enjoyment.* Frequently sweet meditation, and exulting hope of heaven.

4. *Glorious results.* Comes to the goal—the crown—the victory. But what is the case with sinners?

XC.—THE END OF A GOOD MAN.

“Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace.”—Ps. 37: 37.

Come see a good man live, and observe him die! There may be nothing imposing in his earthly state; that may be mean and obscure; but there is dignity in his character, glory in his soul, hope in his death, and peace in his end. ——— How different from that of the wicked! See ver. 20, 35, 36. But the righteous triumph, and depart in peace. The last moments of the sinner are frequently beclouded. Wealth and grandeur, power and honor, cannot alleviate the pain of dying. Henry II. of England, after a splendid reign, said, “There is not a corner of my heart in which I can find relief.”

I. THE CHARACTER OF A GOOD MAN. “Perfect man and upright.”

1. *Perfect.* The word means complete, wanting nothing. That which is fully manifested in its perfection, 2 Cor. 12: 9; applied to faith, James 2: 22; to God, Matt. 5: 48; Deut. 32: 4; to Christ, Heb. 2: 10; 5: 9; to the law, Ps. 19: 7. And it is applied to believers in the text, Col. 1: 28; 2: 10.

But this character cannot be *abstractedly* applied to Christians; for of themselves none are perfect. “I have seen an end of all perfection.” Ps. 119: 96. This is true of the most eminent saints. Scarcely one has escaped the charge of moral defect by the pen of inspiration. Once

Paul appeared to temporize. Peter dissembled, Barnabas, whose praise was in all the churches, was carried away with the dissimulation. There is no perfect minister, and no sinless saint. The most holy upon earth are sanctified but in part; and the old man, though crucified, is not slain. There is something lacking in every feature, in every grace, and believers are not without guilt, though they may be free from guile. Job 9 : 20, 30; Ps. 40 : 12; Rom. 7 : 12, 14.

Believers are *perfect* or complete, only in Christ. "Ye are complete in him." Col. 2 : 10.

(1.) As to their *redemption*. Christ has stood in their place, and met all the demands of the law. — (2.) As to their *justification*. Acts 13 : 38. Now regarded by Jehovah as innocent — accepted. — (3.) As to their *regeneration*. His work is perfect. New creature. Imparts the germ of spiritual and celestial life. "It springeth up into everlasting life." Such an internal new creation will make them *perfectly sincere*. Matt. 19 : 16-22. "If thou wilt be perfect." If thou wilt be a sincere and real character; not an empty, talking professor. See Gen. 17 : 1; "perfect," i. e., be entire, be a real character, truly fearing God. "Behold an Israelite," etc. — (4.) As to their *happiness*. Perfect peace, comfort, etc., can be given by Christ. — (5.) As to their *services*, though imperfect, yet acceptable through the medium of Christ's merits — rendered holy by his intercession, Rev. 8 : 3. — (6.) As to their *triumphs*. He provides invincible armor — gives sufficient grace — and makes more than conquerors. A determination to go forward, and to have heaven, to press onward, etc., is called a perfect state, Phil. 3 : 12-15. — (7.) As to their heavenly state — destined to be *perfect* there. Heb. 12 : 23; Jude 24.

2. *Upright*. Honest, candid, sincere, just, without hypocrisy.

The man is what he pretends to be. He loves mercy, does justly, and walks humbly with his God. He respects the rights of others. He follows the golden rule. He never oppresses, overreaches, etc. He is upright: it appears in his countenance and figure. Having a conscience void of offence, he can bear the gaze of any one whom he may meet. He hangs not down his head through conscious guilt or shame; no, he is upright. He has a faith which produces good works.

II. THE PEACEFUL END OF A GOOD MAN. "The end of that man is peace."

The End. He must die. The best must depart. However lovely, useful, and endeared, they must be dissolved.

The end is Peace. The very opposite of agitation, confusion, darkness, and despair.

1. *Peace with God* through, etc. Rom. 5 : 1. Sins and guilt taken away. These are not present to annoy and distress.

2. *Peace with his fellow-creatures*. He has labored for their good, etc.

3. *Peace with his conscience*. Sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice.

4. *Peace, even holy joy and triumph*. He conquers all his enemies by Divine power. The Saviour then visits and communes with him. Angels attend him.

Mark the perfect man! What a glorious spectacle! Contrast him with the dying sinner. See in him the excellency of religion — that it is not a vain thing to serve the Lord. Mark him! and earnestly pray, "Let me die the death of the righteous," etc.

XCI. — THE DANGER OF APATHY.

"Woe to them that are at ease in Zion."—Amos 1 : 1.

RELIGION does not consist in mere connection with the Christian Church, nor in mere formal worship. It has an aspect on the internal condition. It is connected with the soul of man. Formal worship without the consecration of the heart, will avail nothing when we are subjected to the Divine scrutiny.

The ancient Jews frequently deceived themselves as to the nature of religion. They paid undue attention to their national distinctions, and to their connection with the temple—to its external pomp and glory, and lost sight of the spirituality which its services were designed to promote. They lost the substance in the shadow, the spirit in the letter. When the prophet wrote these words, they were threatened with Divine punishments.——But they were at ease, and unalarmed! They "trusted in the mountain of Samaria;" they "put far away the evil day," v. 1, 3. As dwellers in Zion, they calculated that its defences were impregnable; that because it was the "royal city," where were set the thrones of the house of David; that because it was "the holy city," where the temple was, and the testimony of Israel, they confidently expected that it would ever be a sanctuary to shelter them from Divine judgments; hence v. 7, 8.

Thus many at the present day are puffed up with pride, and lulled asleep in carnal security by their Church privileges, and the place they have in Zion.——Inquire

I. WHAT THIS DENUNCIATION IMPLIES?

Zion has a reference to the ancient temple. It was situated on Mount Zion. The Christian Church is now called Zion in allusion to it, and all who trust in Christ are connected with it, Heb. 12 : 22. It has also a reference to heaven, and all who die in the Lord are exalted to the celestial mount, Rev. 14 : 1.

The Church is that "kingdom" or dispensation, which Christ came to establish. All who bow to the sceptre of Immanuel, are its subjects. And it is the will of God that their numbers and their graces should progressively advance, that Zion may be glorious in the earth.

It is the will of God that this should be effected by Christian zeal and activity. They are called into his vineyard for that purpose. For this ministers receive from Christ gifts and graces—for this ordinary Christians are to labor and pray—to consecrate mental vigor, personal attendance, pecuniary help, holiness of life, and union of effort, and

gladly spend and be spent for Christ. 2 Cor. 12 : 15.—Hence they are called laborers—co-workers with God—fellow-helpers of the truth—servants of Christ, soldiers, watchmen, etc.

The effect of Divine Truth upon the mind is zeal and activity to promote Zion's welfare. Was not this the case with the Apostles and primitive evangelists? Though one differs from another in glory, yet each is a bright star, and glows to the praise of Jehovah. Eminent zeal and eminent usefulness are the produce of a strong apprehension and a deep sense of Divine truth, inducing the soul first ardently to love it, and then to propagate the healing benefit to all around. In whatever soul the living water is found, it powerfully operates against all obstructions. It stays not in all its course; and every subject of it would gladly bear all to whom he has access along with him into the paradisiacal bliss. The Christian not only prays, Let "thy kingdom come," but he labors that it may come. "It is good to be zealously," Gal. 4 : 18.

"To burn with a seraphic zeal,
To benefit mankind,
Is bliss, a worldling cannot feel;
It marks a Godlike mind."

The necessity for such zealous and united action in the Church will appear if we consider the vast amount of moral and spiritual evil in the world—the ruination of multitudes of souls thereby—that the Gospel is the mighty lever to elevate the sinner from wretchedness here and eternal woe hereafter—and also if we consider the ultimate and sublime destination of the Church, and the numerous enemies by whom the Church is assailed! Should there then be ease in Zion? Disunions? etc. "Woe to them that are," etc.

II. WHO MAY BE SAID TO BE AT EASE IN ZION?

To be at ease is to be careless, indifferent, unconcerned, slothful, while others are active. It is a state of lukewarmness, Rev. 3 : 15, 16. It is a state of spiritual declension, approximating to death, Rev. 3 : 2.—The following characters may be said to be at ease in Zion :—

1. It is the case with *many who hear the Gospel.*

They have heard it for years—have been warned times without number. They have heard the thunders of the law, and the silver trumpet of the Gospel proclaiming life to the dead, and heaven to the lost. They have been conducted to the agony in the garden, and to the tragic suffering of Christ on the cross. To them the solemnities of death, judgment, and eternity, have been frequently presented. Sometimes they have felt, trembled, and resolved, but have soon relapsed into a state of apathy and ease. "Go thy way for this time," etc.

2. *The mere professor*—the outer court worshipper—the formalist.

These may pretend much—love to be prominent that they may be eulogized; but the truth having never properly impressed their hearts, they will consequently be at ease in Zion. A name to live while they are dead. Occasionally, through some novel and stimulating cause, they may exhibit life and activity; but being artificial, it is only tran-

sient;—resembling a dead animal subjected to galvanic action; it apparently starts into life, but when the action ceases, it relapses into the immobility of death.

3. *Those who have inordinate attachment to the world*—who suffer themselves to be beguiled by the fascination of wealth—secular pursuits.

They are diligent here, rising early, etc., devising, scheming, toiling, agonizing—but the one thing needful is forgot. Is not this to love the body more than the soul—the world more than Christ? Such puerile conduct will amaze us when we retrospect it in eternity.

* 4. *Those are sure to be at ease in Zion who only partially attend to the public and private means of grace.*

They neglect the assembling of themselves together—absent at the prayer-meeting, etc.,—reading the Scriptures, private prayer, etc., are neglected. And as those are the Divinely appointed sources of Christian life and zeal, it is evident that the neglect of them will induce apathy in God's cause. Some by their partial attendance appear as if they had no identity with God's people.

5. *They who reluctantly and niggardly yield their support to the cause of Christ.* God loveth a cheerful giver according to what a man hath, etc. And where the love of Christ constrains, it will be so. Covetousness freezes the heart and paralyzes the hand.

Being at ease in Zion, having no deep interest in its welfare, some will not give what God has abundantly given them. If an appetite, a lust, a pleasure, a carnal propensity, calls for pecuniary expenditure, it is promptly forthcoming; but if God speaks in thunders, or Christ pleads with groans, tears, and blood, it is all in vain.

6. *Those who depend upon the purposes of God abstractedly considered.* They say God's purposes are immutable, and therefore his cause *will* be carried on. Their exertions may be dispensed with. —Not so; “this is the will of God even your sanctification”—holy consecration to his services. All in his vineyard must work.

III. WHAT WILL BE THE EFFECTS OF SUCH APATHY?

1. It is very painful to those who are not at ease in Zion.
2. It is injurious to the Church. There is want of unity—their exertions are lost.
3. It injures themselves. Lose the pleasures of religious activity; the pleasures of ordinances—have no clear evidence of Divine acceptance—unsatisfactory hope of heaven.
4. It is a direct violation of the will of God—and therefore will subject the soul to woe. “Woe to them that are at ease in Zion.” Woe to the slothful servant when the Lord shall come to judge the world. Parable of the talents, Matt. 25 : 14, etc. See ver. 31, etc.

XCII. — THE RICHES OF DIVINE MERCY.

“Rich in Mercy.” — *EPH. 2 : 4.*

No doctrine has been more strongly opposed, or more shamefully abused, than the doctrine of free and sovereign grace; there is, however, no other method of salvation for lost sinners. — God is rich in mercy, and it is well for us that he is.

The Riches of Divine Mercy will appear if we consider,

I. *The Rank and Character of its objects and recipients.*

Creatures intelligent and animate, akin to angels and to brutes. Fallen creatures, sinful and contumacious — vile, impure, wretched; described, *ver. 1-3.* That such wretched, sinful worms should be the objects of his mercy is truly astonishing, *Rom. 5 : 6-8.*

2. *The source of this Mercy.* “God,” who is rich in mercy. “God so loved,” *John 3 : 16; 1 John 4 : 9, 10.*

Mercy is his glorious attribute, *Ex. 34 : 5-7.* He is the inexhaustible fountain of mercy. “He delighteth in mercy.” The plan of salvation originated in the Divine mind. — Stupendous grace! What was there in man to tempt him from the skies? *

3. *The Ground upon which it rests, and the Medium through which it flows.*

It is granted to man as the result of satisfaction given to Divine Justice. Justice was not sacrificed for the exhibition of Mercy. Jesus Christ was the end of the law — the victim of the law’s curse, and the magnifier of the law. — This was effected by unparalleled suffering, and by an ignominious death. *Col. 1 : 20-22; Rom. 8 : 20-26.*

Said Justice, “Man, I’d fain know what you weigh —
If weight, I spare you; if too light, I slay.”
Man leaped the scale — it mounted — “On my word,
(Said Justice,) less than nothing! where’s my sword?”
Virtue was there, and her small weight would try;
The scale, unsunk, still kicked the beam on high.
Mercy, the whitest dove that ever flew,
From CALVARY fetched a twig of crimson hue:
Aloft it sent the scale on t’other side:
Man smiled, and Justice owned, “I’m satisfied.”

It is therefore rich, exactly adapted to supply the wants of the sinner.

4. *The Provisions of Mercy.* Light for the ignorant — life for the dead — full pardon for the guilty — adoption for the outcast — righteousness for the vile — all spiritual blessings. —

Mercy begins spiritual life in the poor sinner’s soul. — Mercy will carry it on, and consummate it, amid shoutings of “Grace, grace unto it!” — At the battle of Agincourt, it is said, that no sooner had our troops gained the victory, than they fell upon their knees, and sung, — “Non

nobis Domine!" (Not unto us, O Lord); and thus shall it be when grace shall crown the saint with glory. "Not unto us," etc.

5. *The mode of its bestowal.* Gratuitously; without money and price.

The conditions are simple,—repentance and faith. It is preached to all—all without distinction—all ranks and degrees of men—to men whether rich, etc. It is sent to all nations—barbarians, etc.—to men of every grade of intellect.

It is rich in abundance. Isa. 55 : 1, 2.

6. *The final and everlasting results of Divine Mercy* will prove its richness. At the resurrection—at the day of judgment.—In heaven.—Throughout eternity. "Thy mercy, O God, is from everlasting to everlasting."—Look up to heaven and see. How rich there! Mercy has placed those crowns of gold on the heads of those who were heirs of wrath. Mercy has given them the palm of victory. [Amplify.]

Finally. Be thankful for rich mercy—be humble; you have not merited it. Be enriched; why continue wretched and poor any longer, when Heaven itself comes down to dispel your poverty and wretchedness?

XCIIL.—THE REST OF THE SOUL.

"Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."
—Ps. 116 : 7.

God is the only foundation of true happiness; therefore it is the wisdom and privilege of man to look to him for substantial and never-ending bliss. If he applies elsewhere he will be disappointed. — Every thing separate from its centre is in a state of violence; and if intelligent, cannot be happy. Man, while separated from God, is in a state of agitation and misery. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Blessed is he who can say, "Return unto thy rest," etc.

I. GOD HAS GRACIOUSLY BECOME THE REST OF THE SOUL.

Let it be observed that the soul *required rest*. It was absolutely necessary. Contemplate the soul of man as presented in the Scriptures: depraved, impure, guilty, condemned, cursed, and therefore wretched and miserable. What a lamentable description Paul gives, Rom. 8 : 10–19; Gal. 3 : 10. — God has provided for the soul.

1st. *By devising and executing the stupendous plan of redemption*, thereby reconciling the world to himself, 2 Cor. 5 : 18, 19. This was the fruit of infinite love. John 3 : 16.

2d. *By giving rest to the condemned and weary soul*, that penitently and believingly applies to him through Christ. Matt. 11 : 28–30.

He says to the guilty and distressed, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." To the prisoner, "Be free." See Luke 4 : 18. He gives complete absolution, and perfect freedom from all law charges. Hushed is the tempest of wrath. Sheathed is the sword of Divine justice. God smiles. — This is rest. See Isa. 12 : 1, etc. ; Rom. 8 : 33, 34. It is called "entering into rest." Heb. 4 : 8.

3d. *By becoming their portion.* "I am thy God." Isa. 41 : 19.

The outcasts are taken in. "I will be a father unto you." God is their God with all his purposes of grace and mercy concerning them. All his attributes can be called into exercise for them. All the blessings of the new covenant are for them. The guardianship of angels, the influence of the Spirit, and the precious promises are for them. The administration of his government, and the conduct of his providence are for their welfare. — Here, then, there is rest.

4th. *By separating from the world, and sanctifying them to his service.* John 15 : 19 ; 17 : 14-19.

In their former state of sin and worldly devotedness, they had no rest, no peace. In the service of God, they "find rest to their souls ; Christ's yoke is easy," etc. "Great peace have they that love thy law." —

5th. He gives them *rest by spiritual manifestation.* By his Spirit. John 16 : 7. By his word—in his house—by fellowship with him. What delightful rest in prayer ! Ps. 84 : 4-7.

Lastly. He will give them endless rest in heaven—in his immediate presence. Ps. 16 : 11. "There remaineth a rest," etc.

II. THE ENJOYMENT OF THIS REST IS FREQUENTLY INTERRUPTED.

The experience of many Christians confirms this. Sometimes they walk in darkness—have no clear perception of an interest in Christ—are devoid of spiritual enjoyment—they enjoy no rest in God, and are even indifferent about it. Job 23 : 8. — This abject state may be induced

By unwatchfulness—by neglecting the means of grace—the neglect of closet duties—from the want of self-investigation—by worldly association, ever inimical to the prosperity of the soul—by extreme anxiety about secular pursuits, and extreme devotedness to them—by domestic cares, etc. etc.

Thus God and the soul may be separated. The soul may be cast down from the most lofty elevation, its joy be turned into sorrow, its light into darkness, its rest, its calmness, and its triumph, into agitation, confusion, and despair.

III. A TRUE SENSIBILITY OF SPIRITUAL DESTITUTION WILL LEAD THE SOUL TO GOD. "Return unto thy rest."

1st. It is the language of an *awakened sinner.*

He discovers his lost condition—he perceives Christ as his rest. He hears him say, "Come," etc., and he says, "Return." The dove sent

out from the ark found no rest till it returned to Noah, his name signifying rest. The convinced sinner finds no rest but in Christ.

2d. It is the language of *one who perceives the fallacy of trusting in self-righteousness*. What labor Paul made to establish his own righteousness! but he said, "Return unto thy rest," Phil. 3 : 7-9.

That law, so holy and spiritual, I have broken; its penalty I cannot remove; its requirements I cannot perform — its curse is upon me. Around the base of Mount Sinai I see a line drawn which seems to say, Within this circle is nothing but death. On its summit there are the demonstrations of wrath. There the lightnings flash and the thunders roll; the voice of incensed justice demands its victim. I flee from the base of that terrible mountain to the hill of Calvary — the place of refuge; charged, condemned, and pursued by the law, I find rest in the arms of the crucified. Thou, O Jesus, art my substitute, my refuge, my righteousness and strength. Isa. 45 : 24. He is the end of the law for righteousness. Rom. 10 : 4.

3d. It is the language of *the returning backslider*. He has had no rest in sin. The Lord deals *bountifully* with him in sparing him, etc. He says, "Return" — "Cast me not away," etc. Ps. 51 : 11, 12; Hosea 2 : 6, 7.

4th. It is the language of *the afflicted and distressed*.

I am insufficient for these trials. I shall sink if not Divinely supported. God careth for me; he says, "Cast thy burden," etc. "Call upon me," etc. "When thou passest," etc. Isa. 48 : 2. Therefore, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul."

5th. It is the language of *the tempted*.

God succors them. Christ intercedes for them. He prayed for Peter, Luke 22 : 31. The temptation may be great — the struggle long — but triumph comes at last. How sweet then to say, "Return, etc., for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly from temptation.

6th. It is the language of *the perplexed*, dwelling on the mysteries of creation, providence, and grace — driven sometimes to the precipice of infidelity and atheism. I cannot unravel these mysteries. Such knowledge is too high for me. I believe and adore. I will leave all in the hands of God, let others deny his existence and government if they will. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul."

7th. It is the language of *the dying*. God has led me through the wilderness to the borders of the promised land. Yonder I see the goodly land! There is my rest.

Heaven is the very element, and Christ is the centre of every gracious soul; only heaven is the breathing-place, and only Christ is the resting-place; there is the place of its respiration, and there is the seat of its repose. It cannot live out of that element; and it cannot rest out of this centre; it is always struggling till it gets to heaven; it is always restless till it comes to Christ. Therefore when my death comes, I trust I shall say from my heart, "Return unto thy heavenly and eternal rest, O my soul, for," etc.

Rivers to the ocean run,
Nor stay in all their course:
Fire ascending seeks the sun,
Both speed them to their source:

So a soul that's born of God,
Pants to view his glorious face:
Upward tends to his abode,
To rest in his embrace.

IV. THE RETURN OF THE SOUL TO GOD IS INFLUENCED BY THE MOST POWERFUL MOTIVE. "For the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."

The bountifulness of God is a boundless subject, embracing all his purposes of love and mercy, all the arrangements of his covenant, and all the operations of his providence and grace. It is manifested by the death and love of Christ, which love is as deep as the anguish he endured, and the grave in which he lay; as high as the heavens to which he ascended; ancient as eternity, and lasting as the interests of the immortal soul.

This is the source of all spiritual life here, and of eternal life hereafter, and this is the constraining motive for the soul, calmly and hopefully to repose in God.

The Psalmist experienced the kindness of Jehovah in many scenes, raising him from obscurity to be a king—by many deliverances—by hearing his prayers—by preservation from death—by inspiring in him the hope of heaven, etc. See the language preceding our text.—This was the magnet that drew him to God.

XCIV.—GOD PLEADS THE CAUSE OF HIS PEOPLE.

"Plead my cause, O Lord."—Ps. 35 : 1.

MAN's extremity is God's opportunity. The Psalmist was frequently in deep distress, from which no human power could extricate him—then he prayed, "Plead my cause," etc. Ps. 43 : 1 ; 119 : 154.

I. This prayer implies *the existence of difficulty and distress*. David was surrounded with enemies, and sometimes in afflictions. He had a cause to plead, which he committed to God. Thus with all Christians. They have various troubles, in the endurance of which they need the help of God.

II. It is the prayer of one *who distrusts all human help independent of God*. "Plead thou my cause, O Lord," for I cannot withstand these enemies; cannot sustain these trials. I am weak, and sinful, and cannot save myself from Divine wrath—vain also is the help of man. Ps. 142 : 3-5.

III. The prayer implies *a recognition of the wisdom, power, and love*

of God as the friend and advocate of his people. Hence it is said of him, Prov. 22 : 23 ; 23 : 10, 11 ; Jer. 50 : 34 ; 51 : 36 ; Micah 7 : 9. If pleaded by him the issue will be good.

IV. A firm belief that God's aid in pleading the cause of his people can only be obtained *through Christ the great Mediator*, — the advocate with the Father. He pleaded for his disciples when on earth, and he now pleads for them in heaven, Heb. 7 : 25 ; 1 John 2 : 1.

V. The prayer implies a *committal of every case of distress, difficulty, or trial, to the management of God*. Take thy cause, thou child of affliction, to him. Take thy cause, thou tempted one, to him, etc. etc. Go to his throne, and "Cast thy burden upon the Lord for he will sustain it." — The believer is encouraged to commit his cause to God, by the numerous promises of God's assistance. "He is faithful who has promised."

XCV.—CHRISTIANS A BLESSING.

"I will bless thee, and make thy name great ; and thou shalt be a blessing."—GEN. 12 : 2.

THIS promise intimated that to the latest ages important blessings would, for Abram's sake, be given to his posterity. He should be rendered an instrument of great good to his relations, domestics, and neighbors, and his example would be eminently useful till the end of time. All the true blessedness of the world now, or which it ever shall possess, is owing to Abram and his posterity. Through them we have a Bible, a Saviour, and a Gospel. They are the stock on which the Christian Church is grafted. Their very dispersions have proved the riches of the world.—All who are the disciples of him who descended from Abram, are blessed that they may be a blessing.

I. TO BE BLESSED OF THE LORD IS ESSENTIAL TO USEFULNESS.
"I will bless thee."

He blesses them with conversion, or they could not bless the unconverted. They are awakened, regenerated, and enjoy salvation.—Their example is holy — they can speak about salvation.

He blesses them with knowledge, 2 Cor. 4 : 6 ; 1 Pet. 2 : 9. With knowledge of Christ, of his doctrines, or they could not enlighten others.

With spiritual enjoyment, communion with himself, etc., or they could not say, "O come, taste and see that the Lord is gracious."

With mental ability — with various talents ; some with considerable, or extraordinary talents. They are given to be employed ; they qualify for eminent usefulness.

With health and strength, activity and energy. The sick would be glad to be so blessed, that they might be a blessing to others.

With wealth, by which great good may be accomplished. God is the giver of it. It is not their own wealth. For its proper use they are responsible.

With relative situation, power, and authority. Some are parents, etc., some masters, etc.

II. WHEN GOD BLESSETH ANY MAN IT IS WITH A DESIGN THAT HE MAY BE A BLESSING TO OTHERS.—This implies,

Recognition of being blessed of the Lord. It is not merely by my own wisdom, might, etc., that I am blessed. James 1 : 17; Rom. 11 : 85, 86; 1 Cor. 6 : 19, 20.

Recognition of responsibility to God on that account. The blessings of God must be accounted for to him when he shall judge the world. Matt. 25 : 14, etc.

A consecration of that with which he has blessed us to his glory, Rom. 12 : 2. — We may bless the world,

1. *By holy example.* Living the Gospel, and exemplifying it. "Ye are our epistles." 2 Cor. 2 : 3. A holy life has great weight and influence, Matt. 5 : 13-16.

2. *By their prayers.* James 5 : 16. For the Church, and the world.

3. *By diffusing the knowledge of the Gospel.* Ministers may do this by preaching the Gospel faithfully, etc.; and all may support the various institutions designed to bring sinners to the knowledge of the truth. — How many have been thus blessed!

4. *By laboring in that sphere to which our talents are specially appropriate.* Some in the pulpit — others in the Sabbath-school — others in the house of affliction — all by personal entreaty, warning and admonishing the sinner; inviting them to the house of God.

5. *By pecuniary contribution.* While others unhesitatingly give lavishly their money to the promotion of sin, should the Christian foster a niggardly spirit? No; for God loveth a cheerful giver of that which he has given them, and it is expected according to what a man hath, and not according to what a man hath not.

Lastly. Think of the *motives* to induce to this self-consecration. Our having been blessed, as before stated, is a powerful motive. Take also the following:—

Pleasure. An active life is the happiest in the world. Love to God and man sweetens labor.

Success. God will bless such efforts. "Your labor is not in vain in the Lord." "My word shall not return unto me void." What a blessing to the Church was Paul—all the Apostles—Luther, Wickliffe, martyrs, Whitfield, the nonconformists! etc. All our civil and religious institutions—our elevation as a nation, we owe to Christian effort. Christianity has turned the human mind from idolatry, indolence, apathy, and fixed it upon God, and useful arts, science, commerce, etc.

Distinction. An active Christian is infinitely superior to an indolent sinner who destroys much good—to an infidel, or atheist, who seeks principally after sensual indulgence. What have they done to benefit mankind? Where are the institutions to ameliorate the condition of mankind which they have established?

Divine approbation. "If any man serve me, him will my Father honor." He honors them now, and he will at the judgment-day, when

the exploits of warriors and the parade of kings, etc., will appear less than vanity.

XCVI.—THE DAY OF SALVATION.

"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."—2 Cor. 6 : 2.

SOME commentators think this second verse should immediately follow the last verse of chap. 5. — The Apostle quotes from Isa. 49 : 8. The advent of the Messiah was the time of God's pleasure or love—and the day of salvation was the time in which this salvation was manifested and applied. *Now* is the Gospel dispensation; now the day, etc.—the time when God is ready to save every believing sinner.

I. *Salvation was needed.* For man is fallen—a rebel—and condemned, and cannot himself regain the Divine favor.

II. *Salvation has been provided.* By the coming of Jesus Christ—by his sacrifice—by his finished work. 1 Tim. 1 : 15.

III. *Salvation may be enjoyed.* By believing, the sinner may be delivered from the guilt of sin—an entire freedom from all condemnation—freedom from sin's domination. Sanctification commences when a sinner is justified, and it is progressive, and terminates in endless glorification.

IV. *Salvation is freely offered.* If not, what would a poor vile sinner do? He has no righteousness of his own—Isa. 55 : 1; Matt. 11 : 28; John 6 : 37; 7 : 37; Rev. 22 : 17.

V. *Salvation may be enjoyed now.* You have the Gospel of salvation, and can read and understand it. It is proclaimed to you, faithfully and earnestly. You have health, time, etc.—but these may pass away.—There is no salvation beyond the grave. Therefore repent and believe while it is an accepted time, etc.

That this may be the case,

Pray for enlightening and constraining grace. It is the depravity of the heart that produces reluctance to enjoy salvation.

Think how soon you will have done with worldly pleasures, which to you appear more desirable than salvation. The delusion will be evident to you in death and at judgment.

XCVII.—PRAYER.

"Men ought always to pray, and not to faint."—LUKE 18 : 1.

THE parable by which the text is illustrated is very instructive. If perseverance in petition to a fellow-creature issues in success, much

more shall fervent prayer be regarded by God, who delights in his saints, and takes pleasure in the prosperity of his servants.

I. THE NATURE OF PRAYER.

Prayer is the presentation of our heart's desires to God, entreating him to regard them according to his gracious will. Formally it may be regarded as including Adoration, or Reverence, Confession, Petition, and Thanksgiving. Prayer includes,

1. *A Knowledge of God.* As the God of grace through Christ. As a sin-forgiving God—an all-sufficient God—as bountiful and compassionate—as omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent—as the Father of Christ, and our Father in him.

2. *A knowledge of ourselves.* As sinners—as ignorant, weak, impure, as heirs of immortality. As having great duties to perform—malignant foes to encounter—as having to honor God.

3. *Faith in Christ* as the medium of access to God—faith in his intercession. John 14 : 13, 14; Heb. 4 : 15, 16.

4. *The assistance of the Holy Spirit.* Rom. 8 : 26.

5. Petition for blessings suitable to God's will. 1 John 5 : 14.

6. *Sincerity.* Ps. 66 : 18.

7. *Fervency.* Not the energy and warmth of the animal spirits, but the inward feeling of the heart expressed in prayer. James 5 : 6.

II. THE CONSTANCY OF PRAYER. “Men ought always,” etc.

There is a disposition to *faint*. From the pressure of worldly cares—from prayer not being immediately answered—from fear of man on public occasions—from spiritual declension, neglect of prayer being one of the first signs of that declension—where the heart is not engaged, prayer will soon become a burden.

But men ought always to pray. When the appointments of the Church call—when spiritual conflicts alarm—when important duties are to be discharged.

We shall always be surrounded with sin—the enemy of souls will never cease opposition—we shall never be free from wants, never be independent—are always liable to err, and stumble, and fall into misery: therefore *men* ought always to pray.

Pray in the closet—in the household—in the temple, and always mentally as the case may require.

If we pray not we shall not overcome—not win—not obtain the crown of life. If we pray not we shall be lost.

In conclusion, Prayer is the very essence of spiritual pleasure, and the precursor of everlasting praise.

They who pray not are ignorant, unsaved, and liable to perish.

XCVIII.—THE DEPRESSED SOUL'S SOLILOQUY.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." — Ps. 43 : 5.

WHEN the Psalmist uttered this language, he personated God's people in every age. They have their seasons of depression as well as of elevation. "Sorrowful yet rejoicing." The text is the language of Christian experience.

I. THAT THE BEST OF MEN AT TIMES BECOME THE SUBJECTS OF DEPRESSION. They experience,

1. *Habitual depression.* That which is constitutional. Of a nervous temperament—timid, fearful, and often desponding.

2. Depression arising from *inward conflicts*—from the corruptions of the heart—from the suggestions of the Wicked One.

3. Depressions arising from *a sense of imperfections*—defalcation in duty—little progress in the Divine life. How unlike Christ!

4. Depression arising from *domestic trials*. The family is not what he could wish—few or none of its members devoted to God. Shall we all meet in heaven?

5. Depression arising from *personal and relative afflictions*.

6. Depression arising from *approximation to death*.

7. Depression arising from *the low state of Zion*.

II. THAT IT IS THE DUTY OF GOOD MEN TO OVERCOME SUCH DEPRESSION. "Why art thou," etc.

1. Not by *artificial means*, as opiates, alcoholic drinks, to drown the senses—not by plunging into sensual indulgence—pleasures; nor by apathy, stoicism.

2. Overcome this depression by the exercise of *your rational powers*. "Why art thou cast down?" Investigate the cause—these causes are connected with your fallen state—it will ever be so—others better than you have been so depressed—Christ himself—these trials are a necessary discipline to wean you from earth—to cause you to aspire after heaven. 1 Peter 1 : 6-7. — When you arrive in heaven, you will praise God for them.

Despondency cherished is injurious—it dishonors God—it paralyzes exertion—it renders the man a more easy prey to the enemy of souls.

3. *Overcome by hope in God.* He is the refuge of his people in distress. Ps. 46. He delights to bless them. He loves them with an infinite love, and guards them with Almighty power. He is faithful. His covenant stands—it is everlasting.

He can be the health of thy countenance—so change thy circumstances by the operations of his Providence, or so influence and support thy mind by the Holy Spirit of promise, that the habitual gloom of thy countenance shall depart. It shall be irradiated with pleasure.

That thy hope may produce fruition,

Go and spread thy wants before God.

Plead with him through Christ to help and deliver thee. Have faith in God.

He will deliver thee, and thou shalt praise him. Ps. 34 : 4-8; 50 : 15. Thou shalt see and feel the benefit of thy trials.

Hope in God to the end. "Trust in the Lord forever," etc.

XCIX.—CHRIST'S ADDRESS TO THE DECAYING CHURCH.

"Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."—Rev. 3 : 20.

THIS language was addressed to the Church at Laodicea, then in a declining state. — It was situated in the southern part of Phrygia, about forty miles from Ephesus, and not far from Colosse. It was once a large and flourishing city; but it has been destroyed by earthquakes. The place is abandoned, and now lies in solitary ruins.

I. THE STATE OF THE CHURCH AT LAODICEA. It was a state of declension and lukewarmness. — A state of

1. *Lukewarmness*; ver. 15. The word *cold* implies the absence of religion — a state where everything is lifeless and dead. — The word *hot* denotes the opposite, warm, zealous, and fervent in religious services — constrained by the love of Christ. To be neither cold nor hot denotes a profession of religion, but no warm-hearted piety — a state in which there is no decided hostility to Christ and his cause, nor such warm-hearted and honest love as he had a right to expect. From those who profess not his name, he expects nothing but coldness; but from those professing it, he has a right to expect the glow of a warm affection; but he often finds nothing but indifference.

Therefore Christ says, "I would that thou wert cold or hot." I would prefer either of these states to that of lukewarmness. Better be decided one way or the other, and develop thy true character, than profess love when it exists not. It would be more honest — it would be more honorable — it would be better for the Church — it would be better for thyself; for if thy love was *ardent*, thou wouldst be right and happy; if thou hadst no love at all, but *cold*, thou wouldst not be deceiving thyself; and as a sinner thou mightest more easily be brought to repentance. — The most hopeless of all persons, in regard to salvation, are those who are members of the Church without any true religion.

2. *Vain confidence*. Thou sayest, "I am rich," etc. While the Church at Laodicea had declined in numbers and spirituality, their spiritual pride and self-confidence had proportionably increased. Perhaps they reckoned themselves superior to others, as possessed of spiritual gifts,

etc. See 1 Cor. 4 : 8-10; 5 : 2. They preferred themselves to others, and being proud in spirit instead of *poor in spirit*, they resembled the Pharisee, who boasted that he was "rich and increased in goods." Luke 18 : 10-14.

3. *A state of abject wretchedness, and ignorance of that state.* They knew not they were "wretched and miserable," etc. Thus while they were glorying in themselves, the eye of Omniscience had inspected them, and the Hand of truth had recorded their character as one of extreme wretchedness and peril. Self-righteousness renders a person utterly incapable of faith in Christ.—This delusion took place because they were "blind," they had only that "knowledge that puffeth up."—The original expressions are very emphatical, preceded by the definite article: "Thou art *the wretched one*," an outcast and perishing. "Thou art *the miserable one*;"—the object of pity and deep commiseration (so it might be translated), and liable to be miserable forever. "Thou art *the poor one*;" with all thy pretensions to piety, thou hast not religion enough to meet thy trials, thy afflictions, thy death. "Thou art *the blind one*," having no just views of thyself as a sinner, nor of the character of God, nor of the way of salvation. "Thou art *the naked one*," without the garment of salvation, no vital interest in the finished work of Christ.

4. *A state of imminent peril.* "I will spue thee out of my mouth," v. 16. Christ will not dwell in a Church so characterized. He withdraws from it. "Ichabod," is written on its doors,—"The glory is departed." Though he may for a season "stand at the door," he will not dwell with the lukewarm, the proud and self-sufficient. Unless they repent, and become more "fervent in spirit," and look from themselves to Christ, he will finally reject them, even as a man, whose stomach nauseates water that is lukewarm, will cast it out of his mouth with loathing and disgust.

II. THAT CHRIST COMPASSIONATED THE CHURCH AT LAODICEA.

He desires the resuscitation and happiness of his backsliding or declining people. He is willing to return to the Church; for "*he stands at the door and knocks.*"

He stands there with an important *mandate*: "Be zealous and repent," v. 19.—The gracious design of his providential and gracious dealings is to induce this. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." All is done in love.

He stands at the door with the *wisest counsels*, with the *richest blessings*, and the *noblest design*. He counsels them to buy of him; that is, to accept on his own terms, the riches of his grace, *without money*, etc. Isa. 55 : 1, etc. "Gold tried in the fire," even that precious grace and faith which survived the hottest fires of persecution, etc., and which will enrich for eternity,—"*White raiment*;" being naked, it is needed. Put on the robes of salvation: believe, and be justified, etc.—"*Anoint thine eyes*," etc. Examine yourselves by the word of God, and crave the teaching of the Holy Spirit, that heavenly unction which renders the most ignorant wise unto salvation.

Christ is most gracious, earnest, and patient, in seeking for the revival of decaying churches. "Behold, I stand at the door."

It implies *great love and condescension*. The offended, the expelled One sues for readmittance.

It implies *earnestness and importunity*. He knocks at the door of the heart. To recover from wretchedness and woe, to save a soul from death, he *knocks* at the door of the heart for admittance. Sometimes he knocks by the law — by alarms of conscience — by his ministers, who warn, etc.—by his providence—by the fearful end of false professors—by his judgments upon fallen Churches — he knocks by his Spirit.

It implies *patience and long-suffering*. “He stands.” — This sheds a lustre upon the character of the Redeemer, being a merciful as well as a faithful High Priest, and adds to his manifestive glory as the supreme Jehovah. Moses kindled into wrath at the rebellion of Israel. Jonah does “well to be angry,” and Zechariah says in haste, “I will not feed you; that which dieth let it die.” But Christ stands at the door, and knocks again and again. Hosea 11 : 8.

III. COMPLIANCE WITH THE WILL OF CHRIST WILL PRODUCE THE HAPPIEST RESULTS.

Compliance; that is, if convinced of their lukewarm, pharisaic pride, wretched and perishing condition. If they repent, confess their sins, and believe in the Mediator. If they hear his voice so as to be warned and persuaded. — If they open the door, being influenced by the quickening and renovating influence of the Spirit of God. If they discover their own nakedness and wretchedness, and perceive and covet the superlative excellencies of the grace of Christ, constraining them to say, “Begone, all idols, from my heart; only Christ shall dwell there by faith.” — “Come in, thou blessed of the Lord—why standest thou without?”

The happiest results: “I will come in to him,” etc. The state is reversed. A new creation. —

The Divine presence in the heart. “Temples of God once more.” The Divine presence in the Church. The display of his power and glory.

Intimate communion. “I will sup,” etc. — denoting intimacy and friendship. Supper with the ancients was the principal social meal; the idea is, that between the Saviour and the revived soul there would be perfect friendship and the most delightful and endearing communion. They should realize his presence in all the ordinances. They should feast on the rich and abundant provisions of his grace. “Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

C.—THE LITTLE FLOCK GRACIOUSLY CAUTIONED AND CHEERED.

“Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” — LUKE 12 : 32.

WE often distress ourselves with needless anxiety. The design of Christ in the context is to induce his disciples to repose on the love and

fostering care of his providence while passing through life, and to depend on his grace for spiritual bliss here, and the enjoyment of a kingdom everlasting.

I. AN INTERESTING SIMILITUDE. The Church of God is compared to a "*flock*." Every believer in Christ is a member of this flock. "My sheep hear my voice." John 10. Once they belonged not to it. "Ye were as sheep going astray." 1 Pet. 2: 25; Luke 15. They have been, therefore,

Wandering sheep; from the green pastures to the barren wilderness; from the fountain of all good, from living waters, to broken cisterns, etc. — *Exposed to danger*. As a sheep when it wanders from the fold; few animals are beset with more dangers, from ravenous beasts, etc. Possess little courage, cunning, means of defence. So the sinner is exposed to enemies—to danger—to the second death. — *Helpless sheep*. All sinners are "without strength."

They have been gathered into the Divine Fold by the Great Shepherd. He has enlightened their minds—led them to Christ for moral cleansing—and they have dedicated themselves to God. They are now his flock. Christ is their Shepherd, called the Good Shepherd, the Great Shepherd, the Chief Shepherd, and God's Shepherd. He feeds—guides—refreshes—and defends and saves his flock.

II. A PAINFUL FACT. "Little flock," or very little flock. The original expression is a double diminutive, the literal translation of which is *little little flock*. This is true of Christ's flock in this world: his sheep are but few and feeble. The Church is a vineyard, a garden, a small spot, compared with the wilderness of this world; as in the case of Israel, who were like two little flocks of kids when the Syrians filled the country, 1 Kings 20: 27. — A little flock when compared with the Heathen world, and the vast multitudes devoted to sensuality, to the love of mammon, and to the commission of sin, with greediness—the "men of the world, who have their portion in this life."

It always has been so. To join that flock involves sacrifices and self-denial; to this the heart of man is opposed.

III. A GRACIOUS PURPOSE. "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." The kingdom of grace here—of heaven, of glory hereafter. Called also a "crown of glory," 1 Pet. 5: 4, a throne of power, Rev. 3: 21, unsearchable riches, far exceeding the peculiar treasures of kings and provinces. See Matt. 25: 34. A kingdom of holiness—peace—happiness, dignity, and triumph—an eternal kingdom.

This kingdom is a Gift, and he makes us meet for it. "Your Father's good pleasure." He will give it with more than paternal benevolence and delight. It is a gift flowing from his grace, his sovereign will and pleasure.

IV. A NECESSARY CAUTION. "Fear not." The fears of God's flock are many—arising from various causes. — Why fear, when you have God Almighty for your Father—who has so much "good pleasure" towards you — Why fear? The treasures of a kingdom are yours, and a Shepherd infinitely wise and kind will guide you safely through this world to the possession of it.

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